

홍정훈 지음 | KKUEM, 철이 일러스트

機神傳記
DAWN BRINGER

기신전기 던브링어

우주 최강의 관심사병

1





AREA FOR
MONITORING

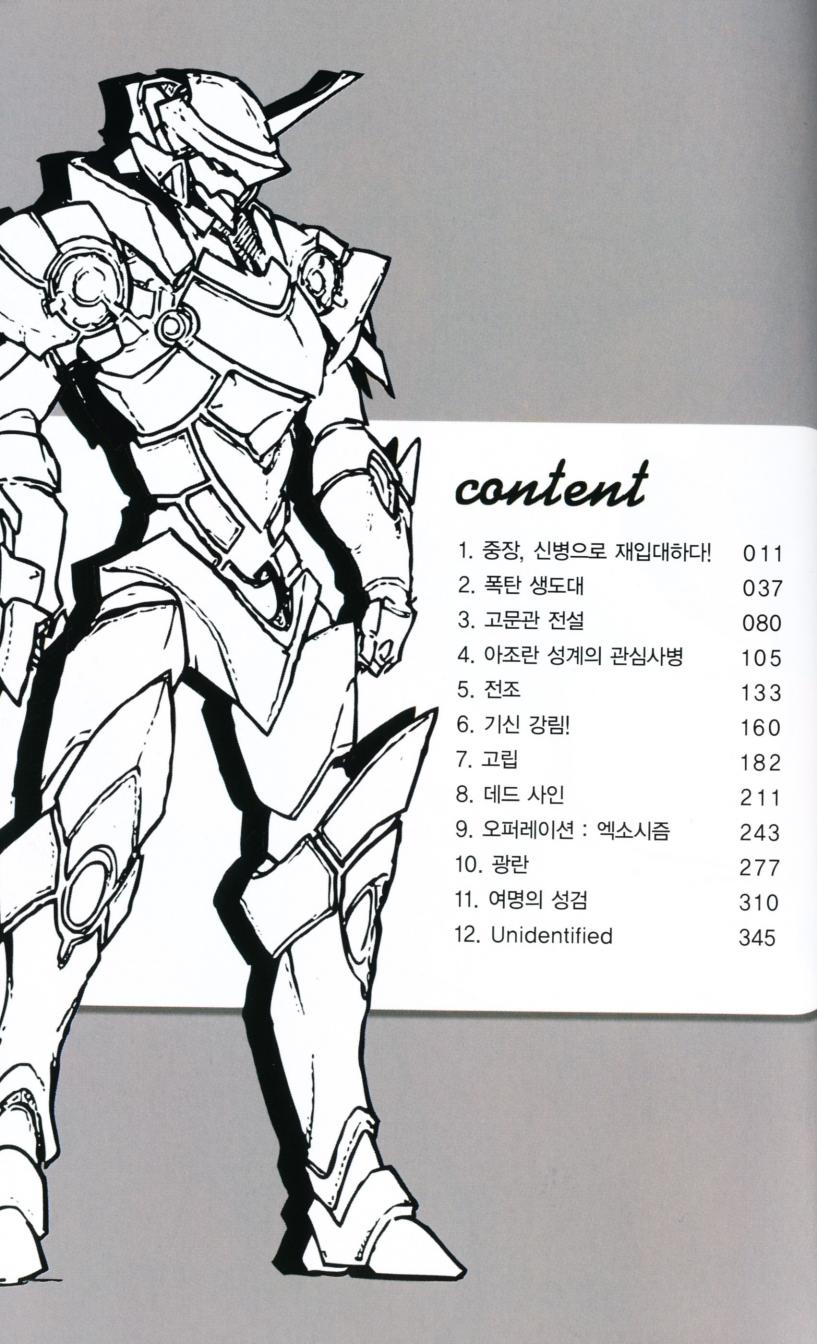
“.....매우 참신한 고문관이군.”



“내가 레저스 던브링어 중장!
이분이 루이스 메이나드 대장님 이시다!”







content

1. 중장, 신병으로 재입대하다!	011
2. 폭탄 생도대	037
3. 고문관 전설	080
4. 아조란 성계의 관심사병	105
5. 전조	133
6. 기신 강림!	160
7. 고립	182
8. 데드 사인	211
9. 오퍼레이션 : 엑소시즘	243
10. 광란	277
11. 여명의 성검	310
12. Unidentified	345



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1

우주 최강의 관심사병



01. Vice Admiral, reenlisted as a recruit!

In the year 2120 A.D., human explorers on Mars discovered a specimen of a silicon-based alien species, called the Letix.

The complete alien life form Letix navigated itself around the outer space; growing by absorbing energy from stars. And surprisingly, that existence didn't only exist in the 3rd dimension. For the first time in the history of mankind, humans were able to make contact with an organism that existed outside the third dimension.

By analysing this Letix, the humans were able to master the art of hyperspace travelling. As a result, humans were able to escape Earth and expand not only within their own solar system, but to the far reaches of the entire universe.

Even with the information gathered from the Letix, it still took humans 80 years to develop the technology and capacity necessary for hyperspace travel.

With the Earth year 2200 A.D. as its start, a new intergalactic power was born, as the human race set out to explore the every corner of the known universe.

However, human contact with the Letix did not only bring technological advances and good fortunes: a hostile assembly of Letix started to censor the human race and its advancements. Threatened with complete annihilation, humans waged a war against these Letix...

This information, being broadcasted on the public network, was projected onto my hologram projector while it was in hibernation.

I wonder if kids these days sleep in class. Why did they broadcast such basic and trivial information? Thinking along those lines, I stretched out my arms.

“My body feels so stiff after the cold-sleep since I haven’t had one in a while.”

I pulled myself up from the cold-sleep purposed bed. Normal people would suffer instant death as soon as they are put to a cold-sleep, but since I had space marine type nano-machines installed in me, I stood up feeling only slightly drowsy.

“Haa, why do I still feel sleepy after a cold-sleep?”

I looked at the mirror as I yawned. There stood a half Mongolian and half Caucasian youth who appeared to be 17 years old with light brown hair and black eyes.

I feel like I've lost quite a bit of muscle since I've been sustained on fluids while I was asleep, but I guess I'm mistaken.

I tensed up my muscles, like how the male ancestors would've done in the past, to check my body.

"Hmm, it's a bit cold."

Just why did they use a rash guard as the standard attire for cold sleep? It's cold.

Complaining, I headed towards my cabinet. However, I noticed some concerning figures on the display next to the cold-sleep bed as I walked by.

Seventh of April, Space Year 189. 9:30 AM Federation Standard.

"What? Space Year 189?"

The year I fell asleep was... hmm, I can't remember clearly because I've been frozen too much, I'm pretty sure it wasn't a three digit number.

That's right, it was the year 69. The year 69 which was still crystal clear in my head because various reasons (a number is just a number, right?). Then that means that I've been in cold-sleep for 120 years.

"Ha... these guys. It's not funny. Not funny at all."

I ignored the hologram display next to the cold sleep bed and approached the cabinet.

"Vice Admiral Lezirth Dawnbringer—1st Space Marines and Commander of Dawn Corps. Deactivate hibernation!"

The cabinet that was programmed to react to my voice played an electronic beep but then displayed a red error screen shortly after.

Huh? Was it broken?

Now that I looked around the place, it really did look like 120 years had passed with all the collected dust on the interior. They sure worked hard for this prank.

"So, these guys think that they can play a prank on me since I've been nice to them as a Vice Admiral, huh? Should I grab my arms again? Hey! Hurry up and come out here. If you don't, I'm going to smash this cabinet open, you know? I can't go around naked now, can I?"

Even when I kept sending signals via the private channel of Dawn Corps, no-one appeared.

Huh? Don't tell me we're under attack or something.

But there's no way the First Space Marines can be wiped out so quickly. Something must've happened while I was hibernating.

Suspecting something was wrong, I grabbed the cabinet and pulled it open by force.

"Huh?"

The cabinet door opened without much resistance. Then surprisingly, there was a plank of plywood behind it.

Feeling rushed, I put on something over my cold-sleep attire and opened the plywood up. When I did, a dark, storage like place with heaps of random stuff piled up towards the back came into sight.

"What? What's going on?"

I didn't know what was going on. I tried to open the actual door of the hibernation chamber, but it wouldn't budge.

"Damn it. It... doesn't seem to be a joke. Don't tell me I've been hibernating for the last 120 years?"

I was starting to feel nervous, but I couldn't start panicking now. Surprising people who just awoke from a cold-sleep with 'You've been asleep for the last millennia~' was a common prank to play.

It would be a pain if someone saw my panicking appearance and recorded it. The navy recruits these days must've been cursed by a laughing ghost or something, because they loved pranks more than anything else even after being held in detention.

I can't be fooled by these things.

I decided to escape through the storage space for now.

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[Congratulations on being admitted into the Space Federal Military Forces. This planet Epiece—2 is under the direct control of the Space Federation. For those who are interested in joining the Federal Military Forces, please visit the Recruits Office.]

[In space, there are numerous illnesses that all of you never would've faced before. If anyone feels ill, please report to the Infirmary.]

[The planet Epiece—2 has a gravity of 103.45% compared to the standard level. It might be hard to get accustomed to, so please use an assistant robot for help if you are coming from a plane with a lower gravity level.]

The female voice being played over the speakers sounded a lot like instructions being given out at a station for the travellers. No, the place that I actually exited after smashing through the cabinet looked a lot like a storage area in a station.

What's going on? It doesn't seem to be a joke at all.

I was wearing the rash guard, which was nothing more than just a swim suit and supposedly the cold-sleep attire.

If they did this as a joke, even a good natured person like myself wouldn't be able to overlook this. How dare they let the commander of Dawn Corps walk around the Space Station wearing nothing but a swim suit?

This was going to be a hot topic to discuss throughout the whole Federation. Doing something like this was a big enough crime to be executed for insulting a senior officer. Hence, this was not my subordinates' doing.

"H-Hey, you. What did you do with your shoes?"

"Were you robbed?"

Men wearing yellow uniforms, presumably station workers, approached and inspected me.

I ignored them and searched for my belongings. But I obviously didn't have any pockets while being nearly naked, so the only thing that I could grab onto was the dog tag hanging around my neck.

"Dog tag... that's it, I have my dog tag!"

Although most identification methods had been made digital and we didn't require any physical ID, the dog tags were kept in order to retain the customs back on Earth.

I held onto my dog tag and headed towards the Recruits Office. Peoples' gazes were directed at me. Well, that was to be expected as I was striding through the station barefoot and in nothing but rash guard.

I could see the sun of the Epiece system, Epiece, rising.

The crimson sun that shone between the gaps of solar panels was the proof that this solar system was going to be sustained for another 200,000,000 years. So that was why the Space Federation chose to settle on the Epiece solar system and use Epiece—2 as its military planet.

Everyone from the Space Federation and recruits from other planets rushed in to the Epiece—2 station. And all of them stared at me.

To think that I, the hero of the Space Federation Wars and the Commander of Dawn Corps, was being watched as I walked in near-naked attire, was embarrassing. It was so damn embarrassing.

Then suddenly security guards who were holding rifles stopped me in my tracks.

“You! Stop there! Identify yourself!”

“Ehh?”

“Don’t move!”

Saying that, they sent a small exploration robot towards me.

The exploration bot was shaped like a trilobite that went extinct on Earth a long, long time ago and it floated towards me.

There was a playful drawing of a black eye on its back in a manga-like fashion, but it wasn’t cute at all! I didn’t like the fact that it was approaching me to inspect my body. However, the guards were operating by the set manual, so I couldn’t really blame them.

The robot inspected various parts of my body for any space virus or contamination as I held my hands up in the air as instructed.

[Status: Normal.]

“Why are you walking around in that attire?”

When the results turned out to be normal, the security guards loosened their guard. Did they think that I was robbed because I was injured?

“Ah, by the way...”

“You must be from a foreign planet if your ID isn’t on the scan list, so I’ll lead you to the Recruits Office.”

The security guards brought around a small electricity-driven patrol car before I was able to say anything.

I tried to explain my situation to them... but I wasn’t even sure how I could explain in the first place. I couldn’t walk around like this, so I decided to board the patrol car for now.



There were a lot of people lined up at the Recruits Office. The line showed no sign of decreasing even when there were 20 workers processing 20 different people at once.

The guards cut through the line and led me to a Recruits Office worker.

The worker appeared to be around 40 years old by Earth's standard with a not-so-subtle potbelly. He was wearing a uniform that seemed like it was about to burst open. He squinted his eyes as he looked at me.

"What's this meant to be?"

"I thought he was a volunteer recruit from a foreign planet since he didn't show up on our data base when I performed an ID scan on him. It's better than leaving him naked and wandering around the station. Please take care of him quickly."

"Listen here, guards. Can't you see all those people in the line? I can't take care of this guy first."

"But we can't let him walk around the station naked. And our chief is gay. We can't bring a cute naked guy like him to our office."

"He'll eat him up thinking that he's a holiday present."

The guards giggled as they said that.

My, my. Look at these fools. How dare they sexually harass a three-star officer.

But I couldn't get angry, as it was true that I was prancing around nearly-naked. Ughh, how embarrassing. I, Lezirth, lived my life without a single embarrassing episode, but why was this happening to me now?

"Tsk, can't be helped then. I'm not going to do anything when I see more recruits walking around naked."

Saying that, the officer shooed the guards away.

"Ah, so... um, how should I say this.... I don't know what happened, but it seems like I've been unenlisted from the military?"

When the security guards left, I pulled out my dog tag. I didn't reveal it to the guards as I did not want to be embarrassed in front of them.

"My name is Lezirth Dawnbringer. 1st Space Marines, Commander of Dawn Corps— Vice Admiral Dawnbringer."

I was the one who was saying it, but I sounded coarse. However, it can't be helped. I liked to talk informally in casual places, but as a Vice Admiral, I had to talk like this when I was giving out orders.

"Huh... dog tag? Hold on a moment..."

The officer took the dog tag from me and scanned it, only to be surprised at the result.

"Lezirth Dawnbringer, Commander of Dawn Corps? Is this for real? Really? No way, right?"

"Ah, so anyways..."

"Well if it's really genuine, then it's quite a treasure. So go sell to a souvenir shop or to a crazy collector. So, you're a new recruit?"

"What?"

I was taken aback at the officer's attitude. This guy didn't believe that I was Lezirth Dawnbringer at all. Was it because I looked young?

But as a humanoid-type Replicant, I was trained for 10 years before being enlisted into the military at the age of 10. I appeared to be 17 years old, but I was actually over 100 years old.

"Now listen here, officer, I'm telling you that I'm Lezirth Dawnbringer...."

"I'm just going to check your genes."

Without asking for my permission, he activated the genetic scanner.

As the bluish laser scanned me from the top of my head, I closed my eyes instantly. There was a risk of going blind if the laser shone directly into one's eyes while scanning.

My genetics must've been analysed instantly, because I could hear the officer complaining.

"Tsk, it's a Replicant? Why didn't the makers put a marking on his right eye? I knew something was suspicious. I can't understand why the Space Federation allows your kind to hold a gun."

The officer complained as he handed a file to me.

"But here, I do have a duty to fulfil, so I can't really reject a fake humanoid like you."

"Eh? What? Officer, what did you just say to me?"

Not caring how surprised I was, the officer filled out my recruitment form without my permission.

"Now then, go wait over at the back. Hurry up!"

"No, listen to me, officer!"

Did this bastard make fun of me; the one who led an army of 100,000 to battle over 10 billion Letix forces? Didn't he know that I gathered enough medals to do weight training with over the many battles that I fought as a war hero?

This officer must have a death wish to be treating me as a recruit, when I am *the Lezirth Dawnbringer*—the Commander of Dawn Corps of the 1st Space Marines!

It happened as I opened my mouth to train some sense into this person.

"Kuuk."

My stomach started to squirm and churn with grumbling sounds. I suddenly got hungry.

A black haired female officer who appeared to be in her 20s held back her laughter as she operated a terminal.

"Hehe, I packed too many muffins this morning. Would you like some?"

The junior officer smiled and handed me a bread bag. Who... did they think I am?

But the smell piercing my nostrils was so good. Ah, this somewhat cheap smelling spices... was it synthetic cinnamon? I like cinnamon. And is that peanut butter that I smell? I really like peanut butter. Choco-chips? I really, really like choco-chips.

By the time I realised what I was doing, I was holding the muffins.

"Why did you give him food? He would have lunch anyway when he gets assigned to a barrack."

"But there's another two and a half hours until lunch time. I think he would be hungry. Well, it's better than throwing them away, isn't it?"

The junior officer said that and winked at me. On the white part of her right eye, there was a hologram mark that appeared to be intentional. It was most likely a proton hologram.

"Replicants sure get along, huh. Hmph."

The officer grumbled like that and opened the office door.

"Next!"

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As I was led by some soldiers to the barracks, I noticed people distributing army uniforms and boots, as well as some various necessities inside a gymnasium equipped with a huge basketball court.

Seeing that the females and males were heading to the swimming pool and the basketball court respectively, physical testings were probably being carried out as well.

The Space Army uniform provided the basics— protection from heat, cold and pressure as well as some life sustainability, but I was surprised to find an optical camouflage cape that reacts to psychic powers was included.

"This was only supposed to be distributed to the espers, but which bastard added it to the standard set? Well, I'm not complaining though. But they do seem to waste the military budget like there's no tomorrow."

I was worried about this future as I looked at the distributed uniform.

But since I needed a uniform set right now, I lined up like the rest of the recruits. I could discuss the wasted budget after I return to the Commands so I should hurry and change into the uniform.

As I did, I heard someone's cocky tone.

"Oh man, if it isn't the naked recruit? Oh geez. We were the idiots lining up in the line. I never knew there was an easier way out."

"Hey, cut it out man. It's too embarrassing to try."

Two men were purposely snickering to themselves, but loud enough for me to hear.

I glared at them, but they continued to laugh between themselves instead of making a frightened expression.

When I told new recruits to stitch in smiley faces on their military uniform as a joke, over 100 thousand navy men would not only stitch it on their uniforms but their casual clothes as well. That didn't stop there; they even painted smiley faces on Ambush Amphibious Warfare Ships.

To think that I would be made fun of like this when people used to even take my jokes seriously. Grr.... It's not like I can punch them up when I have to keep face as a Vice Admiral.

But it felt like most of the other new recruits aside from those guys hated me. Did they really think that I stripped to cut into the line? Things would only get worse if I got angry at them.

I kept my mouth shut and entered a makeshift screening room made out of panels inside the gym. Inside, they were playing a promotional video clip for new recruits.

[The Letix dominate the planetary system by absorbing minerals from planets and energy from the stars and can grow infinitely. While the Human Race can only utilise Earth and other similar planets, these creatures are able to utilise almost any planet they come across. When the Letix strengthen their forces with their infinite multiplication characteristics, they form an army in order to expand their

habitat towards outer space; the purpose of that army being to destroy all life forms excluding the Letix themselves. Hence, it is impossible for the Human Race to co-exist with Letix.]

A lady in a sexy swimsuit outfit and a pair of red rimmed glasses was licking her lips in a suggestive manner as she explained on the video.

The video could easily be mistaken for an adults video if watched without the audio, and behind the girl were various photos of Letixes.

What was this unbalanced promotion video? Who made this thing? I really have to hold a troop orientation and training session. The military has become slack while I was gone.

While I was caught up in my thoughts, the promotional video changed to the next scene.

This time, a winged blond beauty was winking at the screen with a toga wrapped around her, which could only be seen out of Ancient Greek and Roman mythology.

[Elcros are a winged and undeveloped species. They share some similar genetic makeup to a human, and due to the similar physical appearance, they are suspected to be related to the ancestral humans.... But currently, they are the Human Race's enemy.]

“What?! We’re at war with Elcros?!”

I yelled out of surprise at the screen which obviously wasn’t going to reply to me. All of the new recruits’ gazes were pointed at me.

“What’s with that guy?”

“Wasn’t he the guy who came in all naked?”

“Yep, he sure is a ‘greenie’ alright.”

All of them looked at me like I was a hopeless fellow. But I was more concerned about what was said on the promotional video rather than what those recruits thought.

The Elcros were a species that my Dawn Corps encountered during the war with the Letixes.

The standard of their civilisation was low, but the Elcros served a god named 'The Great Artus' and their faith gave birth to a special power named White Magic.

The Artus, which seemed to be an organism from hyperspace, granted them the ability to jump between dimensions with no scientific methods involved; leading to their presence in 6 different stellar systems already.

I took on the facts that Elcros possessed a mild nature and that they are able to produce fertile offspring with humans, and reported to the Federation that they should be accepted as allies to the Human Race.

"So why the hell are we fighting with the Elcros? Who dared to ignore my report!"

"Hey! Sit down!"

"Isn't he screwed up in the head?"

Hearing the muttering sounds of people behind me, I sat back down for now.

On the video they were arguing that Elcros were an enemy to the Human Race and that humans must abolish their theocratic dictatorship and free them from their governance.

[The Asa are an Amazoness-type species with pointed ears. They maintain a strong maternal line and they consider the Human Race as a tool to maintain their genes.]

By looking at the promotional video, I could tell what the Human Race has done over the past 120 years.

The war with the Letixes was inevitable. Letixes were like fungi and viruses who only seek to fill the entire universe with themselves.

But Elcros on the other hand, were a peaceful species. With certain diplomatic conditions in place, there wasn't a need to fight with them; if ignored, they wouldn't even be aware of the Human Race's existence.

However, humans could not accept the Elcro's government and started to persecute them.

And now, the relationship between Elcros and humans has worsened uncontrollably. While Elcros themselves were offensively weak, Half-Elcros who were born out of the persecution and pro-Elcros military rebels, made up for the weak strength.

The Asa were never a peaceful species, but there was a good chance that they could coexist with the Human Race. However, the Human Race attacked them as humans had a higher scientific civilisation and did not view Asas as equals.

As a result, Asas became an enemy to the Human Race and they were putting up a good fight as they were much more aggressive than Elcros.

By capturing human technicians, Asas were progressing rapidly by stealing knowledge from them. Furthermore, they possessed Black Magic that was much more effective at combating the Human Race than the White Magic possessed by the Elcros.

And Replicants revolted against the Federation.

The artificial humans—Replicants, which the Federation has produced in order to strengthen itself while even going against the 'Veracruz Treaty' that it signed, revolted and formed an independent force.

Strictly speaking, I was a Replicant myself, so that must be why the officer at the Recruits Office insulted me.

The contempt and discrimination to the Replicants ran deep into these people. That was why all Replicants had a hologram sticker installed on their right eye—to tell the Replicants and humans apart.

The only reason why the junior officer gave me food to eat and winked at me wasn't because she was interested in me, but she was cheering me on as a fellow

Replicant. As a discriminated lower class in the Federation, Replicants developed a sense of being part of the same race.

To sum it up, Human Race was now at war with Letix, Elcro, Asa and Rebel Replicant Forces; all at the same time.

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[Now then, we will be having a test to gauge your academics. This test is to assign the recruits here to a suitable field, so please answer the questions diligently.]

As the lady on the promotional video talked, a hologram test paper appeared on the tables.

The questions were easy. Hmm, I'll show them that I wasn't made the commander by pulling strings. I concentrated on the test and filled it out one by one.

I must've stood out as I breezed through the questions, because someone poked me from behind.

"Hey... greenie, show me your answers."

"What?"

Did this runt just call me a greenie? I, the commander of Dawn Corps? This runt really has a death wish doesn't he!!

I glared at him, but instead he tried to threaten me.

"Who do you think you're glaring at, you dink."

Was that supposed to be a threat? I could only make a bitter smile. I felt like a fool taking this guy seriously if he was going to act this childish. I have to show him my authority.

"This test is to measure the individuality of the soldiers such as yourself, so there is no point in cheating; you would only be fooling yourself and suffer by biting off

more than you can chew. It would be your own bad luck if you suffer alone, but other soldiers would also be troubled by you and we cannot let that happen.”

“What are you spouting off? Instructor! The greenie here is asking for my answers!”

The runt raised his hand and called an instructor over. What? Did this guy just try to point the blame on me?

“No! You’re wrong! You got it wrong! On the contrary, this one was the one who was asking me for the...”

While I was trying to explain myself, the runt stared to copy down my answers. Then a sergeant who was yawning near the back slowly stood up.

“Geez, we always get fools like these. Both of you cut it out. Both of you are idiots anyway, so there’s no problem copying each other.”

“W-What did you say?”

I have never been so insulted in my decades of service in the military than I have been today. Losing the will to protest further, I quickly filled out the answer sheet and try to guard his answers half-heartedly.



The results for the test came out as soon as it finished. Only the top 20 students were accepted into the military academy and needless to say, I was placed first on the test.

The runt who copied my answers was ranked 21st, so he just missed out on being accepted into the military school but was accepted into the non-commissioned officer academy. I was unhappy that a bad guy like him was accepted into the non-commissioned officer academy after copying my answers, but he shouldn’t be able to fit in anyway. I should ignore it.

Wearing the military uniform and the military boots, I prepared myself for the next test. There was a physical test waiting for the recruits after the academics. Grip power, sergeant jumps and abdominal strength tests were carried out in the indoor gym, but the stamina tests were being carried out on the tracks outside.

When I stepped onto the tracks after quickly finishing off the grip power, sergeant jumps and abdominal strength tests, I could hear a lot of people cheering. The atmosphere felt like a Space Fighters Competition match on a Saturday night. Why were they so excited over a physical test like this?

“Hey! Try harder, greenie!”

“Is that how a future cadet should be?!”

“Ha ha ha ha! If you’re feeling hot, then strip!”

A girl with short-cut, dark brown hair was panting as she walked on the long distance running tracks. Other female recruits had already finished running, and she was the only remaining person on the tracks.

She was a cute girl with a slender figure, a word that would spring to mind when looking at that girl would be ‘soft’; giving off the feeling of a young girl which could certainly be overlooked by her cute charms.

Walking itself must be hard for her, because she was drenched in sweat. Maybe she came from a low gravity planet?

But I recognised her somehow.

“M-Ms. Maynard, the Chief of Staff?”

I recognised her and jumped onto the tracks.

“W-What the!”

“Hey you! Are you mad?!”

Instructors from all around rushed to stop me. But I spun to lightly avoid the instructor in front of me and jumped over another instructor who appeared afterwards. And I landed coolly!

After avoiding the instructors with sleek and agile movements, I gave a salute worthy of a navy soldier to Maynard.

“Salute! Are you OK? Ms Maynard!”

“Ha... ha... ha. Ah, Vice Admiral Lezirth!”

Chief of Staff Maynard was gasping for breath as she hugged my neck and collapsed.

I helped her up and looked around. The recruits must've been looking forward to seeing what was going to happen next, because they were gathered around the tracks with an expecting gleam in their eyes.

On the other hand, the instructors looked at us with a tired expression. It was understandable, because to them, I was just a recruit who interrupted the previous group while they were carrying out their physical tests. But I didn't have time to think about that.

“Woah, is today a special day or something?”

“The greenie's stupidity is beyond me.”

“I've never seen greenies like these in my whole entire life. Why are recruits saluting each other? Are they mad?”

Instructors grumbled as they came up to me. Protecting Chief Maynard, I laid her gently near the tracks and glared at them.

“Watch your mouth, Ensign! Who do you think this person is!”

“Haaa? Really now, Mr Recruit? We can't be instructors if we're scared of a recruit now, can we?”

“Did you hear this guy? Aren't you getting ahead of yourself? Ensign? Who do you think you are?”

The instructors took turns sneering at Chief Maynard and I. Were they looking down on us?

“I can put up with your rudeness towards me, but how dare you make fun of the Chief of Staff as well!”

Not being able to keep my anger in check, I carelessly applied strength to my yell. Bluish white Cherenkov radiation rippled from my body and the instructors around me were bounced off.

The windows which were able to withstand some degree of draft and gravitational waves, shattered and caused chaos inside the gym.

“Whoa!”

“I-It’s Psyonic powers!”

“W-Was he a Combat Replicant?”

The instructors who were flung off by my yell activated their Psyonic Disturbers instantly.

Psyonic power was a very unique talent and was classified as a dangerous power, but it was easy to disturb and stop it. There were Psyonic Disturbers installed around the parameters of Epiece to prevent crimes by the espers.

The Disturbers installed around the physical testing area let out low sounds like a woofer system. Armed soldiers came rushing in.

“Tsk, I screwed up.”

They weren’t able to stop me with Disturbers of that calibre. However, I was entirely at fault for this incident. Even if I was a Vice Admiral, I was just a fresh recruit in their eyes.

Hence, this situation would be seen as a strange recruit using Psyonic powers all of a sudden and causing a rampage.

I suppose I should surrender for now. There’s no doubt that I was Vice Admiral Lezirth, so things should work out when I can prove my identity.

I raised both of my arms up in the air and kneeled on the floor.

“Are you guys from the same hometown or something? You sure get along as greenies. I guess there’s no other way. You two cool your heads at the guardhouse for now.”

The confused instructors quickly became hostile and rushed at Chief Maynard and I. I could understand that they would want to lock me up at the guardhouse as I have used Psyonic powers, but to think that the Chief of Staff would also be detained!

And so, I, Vice Admiral Lezirth of the 1st Space Marines and Commander of Dawn Corps, and Luise Maynard, the Admiral of the Space Federation, Chief of Staff, were labelled as greenies and were led straight to the guardhouse as recruits.

If that wasn't enough humiliation for the Chief of Staff and me, our troubles had just begun.

02. Bomb Cadet Squad

The Epiece system possessed a red dwarf, which had very efficient hydrogen nuclear fusion reactions. Compared to a normal star, which rapidly consumes hydrogen and carbon and becomes a supernova or a black hole, a red dwarf star was prized for its property of being able to produce stable energy for over 20 billion years.

And this was the second planet in that Epiece system, that used energy from the red dwarf. Epiece—2's energy income was quite stable. However, the military guardhouse was kept chilly no matter how much energy they gathered.

“To think that I’m... inside a guardhouse. H-How embarrassing!”

To think that I, Vice Admiral Lezirth of the 1st Space Marines and Commander of Dawn Corps, would be treated as a mere greenie and be stuck inside a guard house. I couldn’t accept my own worthlessness.

“I’m sorry, Vice Admiral Lezirth. You were caught up in this mess because of me...”

In the cell across to me, the short-cut, dark brown haired girl apologised to me while leaning on the wall and still gasping for breath. The two things on my mind while looking at that blushing girl with red lips, short on breath, were that she was really cute and that I pitied her.

Luise Maynard, the General Office Chief of Staff of the Federation 120 years ago, appeared to be nothing more than a beautiful girl.

“Not at all, Chief of Staff. I’ve troubled you for not being able to keep my anger in check.”

“No. Thank you for getting angry for me. I... really didn’t know what was going on until you arrived. Sniff.”

She must’ve been feeling emotional, because she wasn’t able to continue talking right away.

To be fair, this was an unimaginable situation for her, since right now we’re 120 years in the future, and the Chief of Staff was being treated like that by trainees and instructors.

“It will be OK, I’m here. At your word, I can break out of a guardhouse like this.”

“N-No, doing that would.... They just don’t know what is going on. Also, please talk informally with me, we’re of the same family after all.”

And she smiled after saying that.

The Children of Letix.

Hyperspace travelling wasn’t the only thing that humans received from the first Letix on Mars, dubbed ‘The Old One’.

From the Letix, the human race received space battle tactics— and the manufacturing techniques for ‘Alter Armour’ and ‘Replicants’. Cloning techniques already existed prior to that time, but cloned humans had short life spans and had weak immune systems.

However, Replicants created with the special property of the Letix possessed the ability to store genetic material outside the third dimension, and that gave them strong resistance to radiation.

Even if their DNA gets destroyed by radiation, a back-up would be created in a higher dimension. That genetic information is protected and it adapts to the radiation that destroyed it, resulting in an even stronger immunity.

Among Replicants, the first generation, born directly under The Old One, were called ‘The Children of Letix’.

Admiral Maynard and I were both born of The Old One, hence called ‘The Children of Letix.’ So we could be considered to be siblings.

Even so, I couldn’t treat the Chief of Staff lightly.

“Chief of Staff, just what is going on here?”

I held nothing back, I told her everything, starting from the time I woke up and wandered around the station in a rash guard. Admiral Maynard blushed.

“I also woke up near the station.”

“Eh? That means....”

I quickly imagined Admiral Luise Maynard wandering around in a female rash guard.

A cute brown haired and golden eyed girl, wandering around shyly in the station, barefoot?

Her clothes clung tightly to her body! Clothes that accentuated her hip lines and slender waist, revealing the bridging line of her thighs and her hip. Her bust lines that appeared to be immature but were good enough, should've been shown, right?!

She must've caused a commotion. To think that the Chief of Staff had to go through such embarrassment!!

“Ah, um, I was fine. Telepathy is my specialty after all.”

Admiral Maynard must've read my thoughts, because she answered me. True, she could've forced people to not look at her with her telepathic powers.

“T-That's a relief. Ha ha ha.”

I turned my head away out of embarrassment at having my thoughts read. Admiral Maynard also blushed and bowed her head.

“I think... the hardliners in the army must've purged everything about us. It must've been Admiral Perth and his men.”

“What? But why? Admiral Perth did?”

Admiral Perth was the Vice President of the Joint General Staff 120 years ago and was the second in command of the military. He feared the aliens more than what was necessary, but he shared the same view as me about Elcros not being a threat to the human race.

But for what reason did he go so far as to purge me?

“Don't you remember? Admiral Perth called us Letix in human form, and feared us.”

Among Letix, the foreign space organism, there were superior beings, such as the Old One on Mars—that class which was named Uberlord.



Obviously, there were people who hated us beings, born from technology learnt from the Old One, amongst the earthlings.

“Currently the Space Federation is under a lot of pressure because of the war between the four major forces. While the military is getting stronger, and the war continues, there is great financial loss, and the country is growing weaker and weaker—being dragged around by the military equipment suppliers.”

Ah, I didn’t know that much since I just woke up, but that’s how much things have changed?

“I was able to find this out after watching the promotional video.”

She was able to get this much information out of that near-pornographic promotional video?

I couldn’t help but to be surprised. As expected from the greatest brains of the Federation, Chief of Staff Luise Maynard. To be able to extract high quality information from that rubbish looking video!

“So I accessed the files quickly with a terminal. The key people broadened the scale of the war, and the military took control of the country, making it a militaristic one while we were asleep. It seems like Admiral Perth took on the presidency role twice.”

“That guy became the president?”

And twice at that? It’s a surprise the Federation is still standing.

“Are you saying that they escalated the war just to increase the influence of the army?”

“Yes. And to do so, they must’ve felt the need to purge us.”

“For something like that...”

I was horrified at the thought. At that moment, I heard someone coming towards the guardhouse.

“Who permitted you to talk freely in the guardhouse?”

“Hmm?”

I was dumbfounded at the person who came through the guardhouse doors.

A military uniform-clad, green eyed girl, who had her silver hair neatly organised in a beret, was walking towards them.

Every time she walked the baton that hung around her waist, and her dynamic breasts wobbled. She was a beautiful girl whose feminine lines couldn't be obscured by the military uniform made for practical use.

There wasn't a single mark on her face, so she looked like a sculptured doll. However, that wasn't why I was surprised. I was surprised by the small pair of white wings behind her shoulders.

“Are you the ones who caused a ruckus in the recruit training area, within the first 2 hours of being admitted? To think that they would accept people who're crazy enough to be jailed, the military must really be short on soldiers.”

She appeared to be nearly seventeen. But the tone in her voice sounded arrogant for someone of her age. That way of talking that reflects her appearance... not that I should be talking.

“Ah... t-then you're an Ensign?”

I assumed that she was an Ensign by looking at the mark on her shoulders. However, Admiral Maynard corrected me.

“The colours for ranks are different these days. Black doesn't represent a commissioned Ensign but an Ensign in the Naval Cadets.”

“Ah, I see. So a Naval Cadet? The Federation really must be short on soldiers if they're sending newly graduated Naval Cadets to war.”

As I spoke, I realised what I was doing. I didn't mean to insult that Naval Cadet Ensign, but I ended up speaking too much. The playful side of me went too far.

The Cadet Ensign clenched her fist.

"Are you out of your minds? Who allowed you to speak ill in the guardhouse? You are not even showing any signs of repentance! Are you looking down on me just because I'm half Elcro?"

"Ah, I didn't mean to hurt your feelings, Cadet. I don't plan to look down on your lineage either, so don't be offended."

"Ah ha, you didn't mean to hurt my feelings?"

The Cadet smiled brightly. Oh, what an attractive smile.

"I didn't know what a greenie was... until I met you. But now, I finally understand what they are. You are testing my patience."

She heard my sincere apology and opened the guardhouse door while sighing.

"You will now be under my command. If you refuse, the jail cells will be waiting for you. Now, which will it be? Will you go to jail or will you follow my orders?"

Hmm, how extraordinary.

They examined us, the trouble makers, in the recruiting office for a day and then threw us to the guard house—only to be picked up by the Naval Cadet Ensign on the same day.

This would've been unthinkable 120 years ago. This is how desperate the Federation is for soldiers? 120 years ago, soldiers were selected competitively, so troublesome people were turned away.

But what should I do? I had my face to keep as a Vice Admiral, but I have to follow the instructions of a Naval Cadet who's yet to earn a rank?

"Hmm, what should we do, Admiral Maynard?"

"We should follow her, Vice Admiral Lezirth. After all, we are just fresh recruits right now."

"I suppose we should."

I allowed the Chief of Staff to exit first, and followed after her.

The Elcro Naval Cadet who was silently watching us covered her face with her hands.

"Oh great Artus, lead me not into temptation... and deliver me from the greenies..."

She seemed to rearrange a certain prayer in a strange way.

Sighing, she extended her hand to Admiral Maynard and I. There were two multi-purpose computers in her hand.

"Here, I heard you haven't received these yet."

I took the multi-purpose computer and pinned it to my chest, on top of my military uniform, like a broche. With a whirring mechanical sound, the uniform revitalised and a notification from the Federation appeared and disappeared.

"Now, follow me."



A large school at the foot of a mountain came into view, after catching a tram from the recruit squadron. That was the Second Military and Non-Commissioned Officer Academy of Epiece—2; a collected place for soldiers to train in.

This was a place for Petty Officers who graduated after 4 years of the Military Academy, and ordinary soldiers to train in their respective fields.

"Nothing has changed with the Second Military Academy..."

Admiral Maynard started to think back about the place while looking out the tram window.

"I agree. The last time I visited there was for a graduation speech that I was invited to. Hm... I suppose it was three years prior to the cold sleep. The only thing that's different seems to be the overgrown ivy."

The Second Military Academy hasn't changed at all over the last 120 years.

"Let me ask a serious question, but are you two drug addicts?"

The Elcro Naval Cadet girl didn't seem to like the conversation between the Chief of Staff and I.

"Keep your composure as a Naval Cadet. Is that how you should be speaking?"

I carefully disciplined her. When I did, she opened her eyes wide (she was quite cute) and looked at me.

"My composure as a Naval Cadet? You are the one who is trampling on it and burning it away! Do you plan to disobey me from day 1?"

"N-No... we're..."

Admiral Maynard stopped me as I was about to retort.

The cadet sighed and looked sideways to glare at us.

"Do you know each other? Enlisting on the same day? And Lezirth Dawnbringer and Luise Maynard at that. So you're using the old war heroes' names? Then again, there are at least six people who are named Lezirth in the entire squadron."

She still wasn't taking us seriously even after knowing our names.

"I am that very Vice Admiral Lezirth Dawnbringer and this person here is the very Admiral Luise Maynard."

When I told her so, the cadet broke into laughter.

"Ku... ku ku ku! Ah ha ha ha ha! A-Are you trying to make me laugh to death!? Ah! I really should've recorded that! Ha ha ha ha!"

The girl was hitting the tram's seats and was holding her stomach in laughter. Hmm, this doesn't please me. She's clearly laughing at me, isn't she?

"I should be known for my fairness and sensibleness, but I will not allow someone to look down on someone else's rank, cadet. If you continue to be rude like this...."

"Yes, is that so? Self-proclaimed Vice Admiral Lezirth Dawnbringer. This really is brilliant. Ha ha ha."

Kuk! Was she laughing at me?! How I pity her. This cadet is such a beauty, but there seems to be crap software installed on her compared to her great hardware. Can't she try to talk nicely when she was born as a beauty?

I took the chance to look at the name tag on her chest.

I was not looking at her chest for any other reasons! But of course, her pair was big and had a nice shape to it—I could imagine them being firm by the way they shook while in motion. I preferred firm breasts compared to softer ones, so I could say that hers were exactly my type!

However, I was solemnly reading her name tag! Got it?! I wasn't looking at her breasts!

Who the hell designed the Federation Military uniforms and why did he put the name tag on the chest? Even if that was the custom....

All hail to the great ancient wisdom!

“Uuu! W-What are you looking at!?”

“Ehh.... Cadet Yu Myung Hoa?”

“It's Meihowa. Liu Meihowa.”

“Liu Meihowa? So you have an earthly name even though you're an Elcro?”

“Add the title of Platoon Leader before my name! I won't do anything because there isn't anyone watching, but if you dare to look down on my authority, then I will make sure you pay for your mistakes.”

“That aside, why are you part of the Federation Forces when you're an Elcro?”

“That's because my father is a Federation... isn't what I should be saying! That was a personal question that I have no obligation to answer! If you ask about this one more time I will consider you a rebel and, you will have to have your meals through a straw for a while.”

Pulling a serious expression, she shook her fist before my eyes. As she did, the tram stopped and we arrived at the station.

A fit looking, brown skinned and red haired girl was waiting at the station with a military vehicle. She spotted Ensign Meihowa and saluted.

“Salute! Are these the new troubled recruits, Ensign?”

The girl who was in a Petty Officer uniform had a healthy skin that appeared to be lightly tanned by the sun, and a playful face. Her fit, sexy, legs extended down from the formal miniskirt, and her breasts were, hmm, they were bigger than Cadet Meihowa’s! Her breasts were certainly overflowing with the feminine charms and her body to fat ratio appeared to be low.

Under both of her eyes, there was white war paint smeared; most likely to protect her eyes from the light.

But what was even more surprising was that her ears were pointed. That aspect of her was quite similar to the Asa aliens. Was this a platoon where the Elcro was the Platoon Leader and the Asa was the Platoon Sergeant?

“Relax. As you can see, I do have Asa lineage in my blood, but I don’t have a bad habit of eating men. My name is Aroha Pereira, the Platoon Sergeant. Just call me Sergeant Aroha.”

She offered her hand to me. When I responded to that hand, her smile disappeared from her face.

“You really are stupid, aren’t you? You’re going to shake hands with a Sergeant just because she extended her hand to you, when you’re just a recruit? Don’t you think you should salute first?”

She didn’t have a smile on her face, but her eyes still had one. Was this a prank of some sort?

I noticed the flow straight away, but Admiral Maynard was surprised and grabbed my sleeves.

It can’t be helped. Protecting Admiral Maynard with my body, I stood between the Sergeant and the Admiral.

“We are no ordinary soldiers. We’re Admirals.”

“... What?”

"I am Vice Admiral Lezirth Dawnbringer. And this person here is Admiral Luise Maynard! We cannot prove our identities because there has been a mistake, but it should be revealed soon. Contact the military headquarters at once."

"Ah? Platoon Leader, are they high?"

"Who knows? I have no interest in drugs, so I'm not quite sure.... But there is no doubt that these people are beyond help. I am considering returning them back to the recruits office. What do you think, Sergeant?"

Ensign Meihowa spun her finger next to her head. It was the universal sign of saying someone was crazy.

"There's no point in returning them. They'll come back after going through some lessons or something. We can only put up with them here."

"At this point, I am unsure whether I am a Platoon Leader or a nurse in a psychiatric ward. I shall consider wearing a maid uniform while I am at it."

"Wow~ that's wonderful. Everyone would behave so well."

The Naval Cadet and the Sergeant seemed to be on friendly terms with each other. They were talking like old friends.

"Self-proclaimed Vice Admiral Lezirth Dawnbringer, why don't you exchange greetings with your statue over there?"

When my eyes met Cadet Meihowa's, she pointed to a side path.

Erected there was a statue of an old soldier who stood there looking up at the sky. The words 'Fleet Admiral Lezirth Dawnbringer, 1~ 69 Space Years. KIA' were engraved on the pedestal.

"How embarrassing. I'm not a Fleet Admiral, but a Vice Admiral.... So I died in battle and got promoted two ranks?"

That was the conclusion I could arrive to after thinking about it for a while. Admiral Maynard sighed next to me.

"Look, Lezirth. The important point is that the statues are of completely different people and they were all killed in battle. Killed."

“Eh? I died in battle? Why was I killed?”

“Well now that you’re enlisted, your own KIA will be waiting for you.”

Joking around in a way that only a few would dare to, Sergeant Aroha tapped my back.

And now that I look at it closer, the date of birth is messed up as well. I wasn’t born in the first year of Space Year, but the period of AD before that.

“You said that your name was Luise Maynard, didn’t you? Luise Maynard is over there so go over there and take a good look at yourself. Haaa, they’re everywhere.”

Just like she said, there was a statue of Admiral Luise Maynard in a park on the path leading to the Military Academy. As expected, there was a statue of an old soldier sitting on a chair while holding a pipe on its lip. On the pedestal, the words ‘Fleet Admiral Luise Maynard 1~72 Space Years. KIA’ was engraved.

“Did they smear honey at the guardhouse or something...? You seem to be desperate to go back there, but I hope you have not forgotten that you have missed out on a full day of training. Your ability to survive in a war is decreased if you miss out on training. Cut back on the drugs and immerse yourselves in training from today.”

The silver haired Elcro, Naval Cadet Meihowa was fixing her hair while seated in the military vehicle. She appeared to have silky silver hair, but her hair would spring out like a rocker if she didn’t tie it back with a hair band or put on a hat. That style had its own charms, but it was the style of a rocker, not a soldier.

When she organised her hair and put on her military beret, her hair settled nicely. Hmm, if her hair can have that much volume when not setting it with wax or hair spray, is it an Elcro trait?

As Admiral Maynard stepped onto the vehicle first, she spoke to me.

“This is an order, Lezirth. Call me Luise from now on. Understood?”

“What? B-But....”

I wasn’t able to hide my surprise. She was my senior and I couldn’t address her like that.



"I don't think we should address each other with our titles, Lezirth. According to the history, we're dead. And I also think they removed the information of us being Replicants."

Seeing her stern expression, I realised she was being serious.

Sergeant Aroha laughed as she hopped onto the driver's seat.

"You're really hitting it off. Hey, you'd be in for disciplinary actions for talking privately between recruits, if we weren't kind and were like every other platoon, got it? You're even worse than the other greenies we have in our platoon."

Ensign Meihowa held back the raging Sergeant Aroha.

"That's enough, Sergeant. Let us hurry to the barracks. There is no use talking to the greenies, when they'll only torture themselves...."

For some reason, I was labelled as a greenie by this Platoon Leader and Platoon Sergeant. To think I, who was born to be a soldier, would be called a greenie! What nonsense is this!



The barracks for recruits were set up in a way where they had to share a room with a bunk bed. The rooms were humble, all there was inside were 2 desks for personal use. The rooms were built on the left and right sides of the hallway. It was set up this way so that a superior can walk along the hallway and take the roll call, with the soldiers standing outside their room.

When Ensign Meihowa started to take the roll call, I realised why this platoon was considered as the greenies' den.

Platoon Leader, Naval Cadet Liu Meihowa was half Elcro, half Earthling.

Platoon Sergeant, Petty Officer First Class Aroha Pereira was half Asa, half Earthling.

Most of the other platoon members were Replicants, as well. There was not a single pure Earthling in that group.

The soldiers were looking at Chief Maynard and I with great interest. Without being able to keep his curiosity in check for any longer, a soldier raised his hand.

"Platoon Leader, are those two... pure Earthlings? They don't seem to have the marking on their right eye."

"They do not have the marking, but they are Replicants. They appear to be Replicants from illegal production lines."

The mood quickly turned sour.

"Eh? I-Illegal Replicants are those, right? Those suicide bombers that criminals make."

"Or maybe they're, you know... escorts."

"Damn it! Isn't this platoon made up of Replicants or Halves then?"

"Did you hear? The higher ups apparently call us the bombing platoons. We're just human shields to them. They're saying that losing Replicants and Halves won't affect them at all."

Complaints escaped amongst the soldiers. Ensign Meihowa shouted at them.

"Everyone stop! Who permitted you to gossip during a roll call? Everyone gather around at the training ground right now! All of you!"

The Replicant soldiers had a look of resignation in their eyes. Everyone gathered their equipment and started to leave for the training ground.

"D-Do we have to go as well?"

That's what Chief Maynard asked to the Naval Cadet who has yet become a commissioned Ensign. Goodness me! How can this be happening?

Ensign Meihowa shook her head.

"You will be directed to your room first. But there's only a single free room. How troublesome. We cannot leave a male and a female in the same room."

After making every other soldier leave, she held a look of concern. There was only a single room free in that barracks and she must've thought that she couldn't leave Chief Maynard and I in the same room.

"I'll be OK."

When Chief Maynard answered that she didn't really mind it, Ensign Meihowa quickly blushed for some reason.

"B-But! Even if your relationship is good between you two...."

"No, w-we don't have that sort of relationship, Ensign! How could you say such things before the Chief of Staff!"

I shook my head in panic.

Sergeant Aroha smiled and put her arm around Chief Maynard's shoulder from behind.

"There's a free bed in my room, so why don't we let her sleep there?"

"Great. Then Recruit Lezirth, unpack your belongings and come to the training grounds. I can't stand it anymore. Why do you always rebel against your commanding officers?"

Because you're not my commanding officer! But she would really blow her fuse if I say that, wouldn't she?

"When you call me, you shall call me an Ensign! Or you may also call me Platoon Leader!"

The Naval Cadet Meihowa scanned over me.

Now I could understand the gist of things. Lezirth Dawnbringer and Luise Maynard were both purged from the government records. That truth was being heavily guarded, so now, there shouldn't be any records of me being the Vice Admiral Lezirth Dawnbringer even if I were to contact the military headquarters.

However, wasn't it way too much to ask of the General of the Dawn Corps, who lead 100,000 seamen and 50,000 support troops prior to the cold sleep, to

recognise a non-commissioned Naval Cadet as his superior? Because to me, it's only been a day and 8 hours since I held such power!



Earthling Pureblood Principle.

Stated in that principle was the belief that only pureblood earthlings were worthy, and that Replicants or any other alien life forms must be destroyed by the Federation's Military. This was the basis of that discrimination. The discrimination began almost as soon as Replicants were first created, and this notion was strongly supported by the humans.

Replicants or Clones were created by humans, hence must be used as tools by humans.

Robots were also created by humans, but we must not give them the right to vote.

Those were the arguments put forth by the Pureblood Principle supporters.

In the old Earth government, there was the 'Veracruz Treaty', which stopped any unfair usage of clones. This Veracruz Treaty was a treaty formed in order to stop people from creating clones for physical labour, and for clones not to put humans out of work.

Clones must be allowed the same rights as a human. That way, even if clones are created, they are simply birthing humans, not slaves.

As a result, thoughtless creation of clones was banned.

When this Veracruz Treaty was put into effect, it was one of the few international laws that actually performed as it should and was highly praised.

Afterwards, when the humans were under attack from the alien species known as Letix, the Pureblood Principle supporters' lost their power. This was due to the fact that they were unable to suppress the uprising Replicants, especially when there

were not enough strong soldiers to fight off the Letixes, who were coming to destroy them.

That was similar to the way women's rights were developed during World War II. The supporters had no choice but to accept help from everyone; including the humans, Clones and the Replicants.

However, the world right now seems to be skewed towards the Earthling Pureblood Principle. What happened during the last 120 years?



Anyone could see the fear and the restlessness spreading through the Replicant soldiers gathered at the training ground. If the platoon was made up of Elcro, Asa and Replicants, it was obvious that recruits would be scared shitless.

It was easy for the platoon members to consider themselves as sacrificial lambs of the Federation. This was why the Federation of the past distributed races evenly among the forces.

'There's obviously some distrust of the Federation Government in the army.'

I was waiting in line at the training ground. A Replicant soldier standing next to me, poked my side.

"Hey, where are you from? Why don't you have a marking? Are you from Cartel or something?"

Cartel was a criminal organisation that sold illegal drugs. The Replicant producing techniques must've fallen into the hands of criminal organisations by the looks of things.

"No, I'm the first generation."

"Pfta ha ha ha! You must be mad. When you say first generation, you mean the Children of Letix, right? The pilots of the 12 Kishins. Are you one of them? Huh?"

He brought his finger towards his head and spun it in circles.

"12 Kishins? There are 12 Kishin-class Alter Armours? They must've created some more since the year 69."

Alter Armour was the other technology gained from the contact with Letix, apart from Replicant techniques and hyperspace travel.

Harvested cultured cells, based off the Letix; Old One, would be inserted to the reinforced framework and seating. When done correctly, the Alter Armour becomes a humanoid-type manoeuvring weapon that is capable of displaying immense strength at the pilot's command.

And among the strongest of those Alter Armours were the Kishins.

During the 69 space years, there were only 8 Kishin-class Alter Armours in existence.

Since the fundamental basis of Alter Armours was life itself, the production of these was closer to breeding than manufacturing. There were numerous attempts to create the Kishins, but humanity wasn't able to gain any more Kishin-class Alter Armours.

Hence, the Federation placed the 8 Kishins as the highest class and organised the other Alter Armours as Dominion>Master>Senior>Major>Juvenile>Minor>Minion as a 8 levelled scale.

But if there were 12 Kishins, than that meant that there 4 more Kishins were birthed since then....

"Ohh, I am quite knowledgeable with those things, man"

A somewhat chubby recruit interrupted the conversation. What was with this off-putting way of talking?

"There are 8 in possession of the Space Federation, 2 by the Asa and 2 by the Elcro, making it a total of 12, man."

"Eh? Asa and Elcro have Kishins?"

I didn't know too much about Asas, because that race was encountered after I fell asleep, but on the other hand, the Elcro possessed Kishins? That's quite a surprise.

"Currently, the Federation lost both 'Dawnbringer' and 'Tetragrammaton', 'Omertà' was stolen by the Replicant Rebels and 'Diablo' to the Elcros. Have you been living under a rock to not know all this, dude?"

The recruit looked at me with a look of disbelief.

"What? Dawnbringer and Tetragrammaton are lost?!"

I was unable to hold back my yell. Recruits around me looked at me.

"W-What's with that guy?"

"Is he a psychopath?"

Kehh! What did they say? Me, a psychopath? I was extremely angry, but I had a more important matter at hand.

To think that the Dawnbringer was lost....

Dawnbringer was the machine that I piloted. And the lost Tetragrammaton happened to be Chief Maynard's.

Chief Maynard's and my Kishins were lost by the Pureblood Principle followers of the Federation? Then that must mean that this was planned by the ones who purged us.

'Wait, would they just destroy a Kishin for that reason?'

That was impossible.

Kishins were very valuable resources that couldn't even be produced by money and effort alone. It was also impossible to activate the Kishin-class machines if the pilot didn't meet the standards either.

However, there were nearly 30 billion people 120 years ago. Since that figure was increasing rapidly even under Letix attack, that should mean the population must be a lot higher.

With a population pool as large as that, a pilot capable of being able to pilot a Kishin-class machine should've been born.

Then did that mean that Dawnbringer and Tetragrammaton were lost because of the Federation's mistakes? Well, that's stupid.

And if Omertà and Diablo were stolen by the rebels, then the current state of the Federation was unspeakably bad.

That was the only conclusion I could arrive at.

"Is that really true? Then aren't we in great danger? And what the hell are the Pureblood Principlists thinking?"

"We're not really in danger, man. Dawnbringer and the Dawn Corps suicided with over 10 billion Letix forces, so we're safe for a while. Also, even if the Elcros have a Kishin in possession, they don't pose much of a threat to us Federation Military, man."

My goodness. While it was true that my Dawn Corps fended off over 10 billion Letix forces, we did not die. But to think that they would record it otherwise in history.

If that's the case, did they purge all of my subordinates like myself? They couldn't have put all those people to cold sleep, so did they kill them all?

I thought of my playful subordinates, who pulled pranks on me all the time. They certainly were stressful at times and too playful, but they were good people. There were Replicants, pure blooded earthlings, Cyborgs and Androids, but they were all precious comrades of mine.

"Kuk."

Who was it! Who purged Admiral Luise and I and killed off all of my subordinates?!

I tried desperately to calm my anger down. At that moment, someone came behind my back and called out the recruits and I.

"Stop talking amongst yourself! Recruit Pencolt! Are you two discussing who the greatest greenie under the heavens is amongst yourselves?!"

It was the Platoon Leader, Meihowa.

Other recruits cracked up laughing. Recruit Pencolt pointed his finger at me and spoke.

"I can stand you making fun of this guy! Because he's a greenie! But I can't stand you making fun of me, man!"

Ehh? What was that? That 'I know I'm bad, but not as bad as this guy' sort of confident look. Not only was his way of talking weird, his mentality was out of whack as well.

"What will you do if you cannot stand it?"

Platoon Leader Meihowa asked with exasperation. When she did, Pencolt smirked.

"Nah, I'm just sayin'. I always wanted to say that, man."

"Recruit Pencolt! Position yourself at the gauntlets first. While Recruit Pencolt is doing the gauntlets, Recruit Lezirth, you give me plyometric jumps. Get to it!"

The Ensign had a sense of dissatisfaction in her eyes as she looked at me. Hmm, that's not what I was doing though.

I positioned myself at the plyometric jump station after sighing. It was a variation of hurdles where you had to jump up and down repeatedly. It was great exercise for improving one's stamina and reaction.

"How many do you want?"

"As many as you can do of course! Do at least 60 while Recruit Pencolt goes through the gauntlets!"

Following her orders, I started to perform plyometric jumps. At the same time, Recruit Pencolt grabbed a rifle and jumped onto the gauntlet field.

The gauntlet was a course where a recruit would avoid paintballs and obstacles, shoot at a moving target, and escape by passing by a hand-to-hand combat dummy.

As an effective course that improves cardiopulmonary capacity, running and movement capability, accuracy and close combat, one must be able to clear the course within 90 seconds in order to graduate from the Military Academy. Seamen

in particular had to be able to clear the course in under a minute. When I did it, my record was 22 seconds.

However, as soon as Recruit Pencolt stepped into the course, he started to scream. He was covered from head to toe in paint, and he was rolling about after tripping over obstacles. Crawling under the wire nets on his stomach left him short on breath and when he finally escaped the wire nets and started to shoot, he didn't hit any of the targets.

The moving target was an image of a criminal who held a hostage and the recruit shot at the hostage.

Seeing the head, heart, abdomen, and various lethal places shot, the hostage would've died instantly, had this been a real-life situation. No, since Recruit Pencolt was already hit by the paint balls, he would've been killed in action and promoted 2 ranks.

When Recruit Pencolt wasn't able to escape from the gauntlet, even after four minutes, Sergeant Aroha turned cut the power and dragged him out personally. During that time, I managed to do over 200 plyometric jumps.

"Ha... haven't you ever played any games? You know how it works right?"

"Cough... ku... g-games aren't tiring so I'm fine with them, man. Haa haa."

Recruit Pencolt was gasping for breath as he replied. Sergeant Aroha dropped him in surprise.

"Don't open your mouth! You're foaming!"

"Now now, next recruit, get in there. And Recruit Lezirth, that's enough."

"What, this is enough?"

"Are you a fortified Cyborg or something? Your physical strength is good. If only your head was as good as your physique."

Ensign Meihowa wrinkled her face. Wait, was this girl treating me as an idiot? I can even do 128bit four fundamental arithmetic operations and partial differentiations in my head!

If the rumours about bomb cadet squads could be trusted, this platoon will be stationed on the battlefield after six weeks of basic training. To the front lines, no less—where it was the most dangerous.

Judging by Recruit Pencolt's performance.... How long could this platoon survive? I could understand why Ensign Meihowa was so worried.

Then Recruit Pencolt collapsed on the floor, as if taking his last breaths, with an oxygen mask in his mouth. As he lay there, he formed a V sign with his finger and said to me.

"I touched Sergeant Aroha's ass, I can die a happy man, eh he he heh..."

.... W-What? Why was he looking at me like that? I'm not the same as you! Don't you try to get any sympathy from me!



"Haa, this is worrisome. The average time is 4 minutes even when excluding the failed soldiers."

Ensign Meihowa muttered nervously when most of the recruits passed through the gauntlets.

Even I could feel the pain of having to lead a platoon of failures.

I could tell that all of these recruits were quite underachieving. All of them should be Replicant soldiers, yet they were even worse than Earthling soldiers.

"This is hopeless if we include the failed soldiers. I suppose our King of Greenies is up last."

Sergeant Aroha winked at me. Her bluish eyes and slightly plump lips were quite attractive.

But she wasn't referring to me when she said King of Greenies, right?

"Shouldn't his strength be quite good? He's not even sweating after doing 225 plyometric jumps. Hey greenie! You're up."

Ensign Meihowa handed me a training rifle. Sergeant Aroha snickered and handed me a sports drink.

“You’re worn out from those plyometric jumps, aren’t you? Take a gulp and catch your breath.”

“No, I will finish it before the sports drink goes lukewarm. I shall raise the average of the platoon myself.”

I spoke in a solemn voice since I was slightly offended. When I did, Sergeant Aroha smiled brightly.

“Hmm? Are you the General Guan Yu or something?”

“I, the shortest record holder of this gauntlet course in the Second Military Academy, will show you how it’s really done. Hmph! How dare you call me a greenie! You’ll all be eating your words!”

Although my identity has been purged by corruption, I was still the Commander of Dawn Corps; Lezirth Dawnbringer. I wasn’t someone who should be looked down upon as a greenie! I will show them my skills right here!

I started to get hyped up with enthusiasm and I warmed up.

“Well, do whatever you want. I am looking forward to your performance.”

Ensign Meihowa sighed while covering her face with her hand.

Hmm, she doesn’t seem to trust me. But I won’t ask her to believe me. I’ll prove it with my score time.

“Let’s do this!”

I jumped at the gauntlets. Paint balls were flying towards me, but instead of hiding behind barriers, I zigzagged forwards, minimising the time, and slid under the wire nets! Pulling my torso up after that slide, I shot at the targets with my training rifle and jump up the stairs onto the second floor! I shot down the moving target on the second floor and jumped down using a plank! I shot at even more targets while in mid-air, and slammed right into the hand-to-hand combat dummy, escaping the gauntlet with a mid-air turn.

“21 seconds 40! Wha ha ha ha! I broke my own record!”

I yelled out in joy after seeing the clock set up at the exit of the gauntlet course. But huh? The time wasn’t stopping?

“Huh? What? What’s going on? Was that too fast for the machine to calculate?”

I looked at the clock in surprise. Sergeant Aroha used her finger to point at my training rifle.

“Identify yourself! You have to identify yourself on the rifle to set your record!”

“What? Identifying myself? Did something like that get implemented?”

Such a thing did not exist 120 years ago! Why do they have to digitalise everything when the instructor can just record the time?

Dumbfounded, I looked at the training rifle to find out how to identify myself.

But then it happened.

Rat-a-tat-tat-tat!

The training rifle started to fire paint balls at the recruits and the instructors. The paint balls flew at a frightening speed and covered the recruits and the instructors in pain.

“Kyaaah!”

“Woahh!”

“I-It hit me there! Before I could even use it!”

Ugh, I had caused friendly fire without meaning to. Although, this training rifle was quite rhythmic and fun to use.

No, that’s not what I should be thinking! Look at me! I quickly aimed the rifle towards the sky.

Then Aroha, Meihowa and the numerous recruits glared at me like ghosts covered in bright red paint.



Drip, drip....

My word! Red paint dripped from Meihowa and Aroha's breasts onto the floor. Had they been flat chested, the paint would've dropped flat onto their stomachs. In any case, both options are excellent! It was impossible not to be amazed at them.

To drench girls' body, it was a mistake but that's not bad....

I have never regretted a single thing in my life!

"Oh... oh now. This gun, it's weird..."

"You failed! You greenie! Do you want me to lecture you hard? Hmm?"

Ensign Meihowa glared at me while resetting the gauntlet with the control panel.

"T-That was close. I got my best record."

I could only lick my lips while looking at the gauntlet timer in that cold, chilly mood.

◊ ◊ ◊

Ensign Meihowa must've just finished having a shower, because she walked out while drying her wet, steamy hair with a towel. I was meditating while sitting on the sofa in her office and I sat up straight when I saw her walk out.

"Recruit Lezirth, do you pity me?"

Daggers flew at me from her emerald eyes.

"Hmm? No. You, Platoon Leader Liu Meihowa, will become a splendid soldier. I guarantee it."

"..."

"Why do you make that expression?"

When I asked, she made a complicated expression and sighed.

"While I am surprised at how a greenie like yourself looks up to me as so, I would definitely have been happy if someone else told me that."

She spoke while becoming teary.

Hmm, why was that? Was she like that because she was so happy? She did seem to say 'when you're just a greenie...' type of thing.

"That aside, where's Chief of... Admi... no, hmm, where's Ms. Luise Maynard?"

Since she ordered me not to call her the Chief of Staff or an Admiral, then hmm... what should I call her?

While I was wondering on how I should refer to Chief Maynard from here on out, Ensign Meihowa threw herself down on the sofa in front of me.

"She appears to have come from a low gravity planet, so she will go through some gravity adaptation training. Apart from that, she can be a great supporter. Her academic skills are excellent and while she may be physically weak, she doesn't have to be a soldier. Someone of her calibre is no problem."

"Really? That's a relief."

That was great news for me, as I have been quite worried about Chief Maynard. I smiled naturally.

As I smiled widely, Ensign Meihowa's expression sharpened. Hmm, this lady was really good with her facial expressions.

"The problem is you."

"Huh?"

"Both you and Luise scored high on the academics test.... So if you were normal, they tell me you could've been a Naval Cadet. And that girl's scores were almost unprecedented. In other words, she is here now as a lowly recruit because of your hiccups. Do you understand how heavy that responsibility is?"

"What? Is that so? I caused trouble for her?"

"You didn't know?"

Ensign Meihowa crossed her arms and sighed.

"Really, there isn't much time left until the end of training, and don't you know that our platoon will be sent straight to the battlefields once the training is finished? How can you live without any nervousness? Stay tense. I do not want any men in my platoon to be killed even if it's a greenie like you."

"You truly are a great leader."

When I praised her honestly, she was surprised. She probably didn't expect me to say something like that.

Blushing either because of the bath or because of what I said, she swept her silver hair over her shoulders with her fingers. The moist silver hair shined and light reflected off of it.

"Even if I am telling you this out of my kindness, I am a Platoon Leader while you are a Recruit! Recruit Lezirth! That attitude of yours is going against my authority as a Platoon Leader! I beg of you to start understanding that you are now a Recruit."

"Of course, Naval Cadet. I am not a person who is that senseless."

After hesitating for a moment, I saluted Ensign Meihowa. It was unheard of that a Vice Admiral would salute a low Naval Cadet.... But I was now a Recruit, so I suppose it is normal for me to salute her.

She responded to my salute and smiled bitterly.

"Make sure something like this does not happen again."



When I returned back to my room, Recruit Pencolt was unpacking his bag. As he decorated his desk with various toys and playthings, he looked up at me and snickered.

"Did you stamp yourself onto the beautiful Platoon Leader? To make her notice you by doing stupid things, I guess that's a new way of raising a flag lol."

"What are you saying? Why are you here?"

"They pulled me away from my roommate, saying that someone like you can't be left alone, man. It just means that I'm your roommate from now on."

What? Suddenly being reminded at what he said, I walked out and looked at the nametag on the door.

Stuck on the door was a plate that read 'Concerned Soldiers' Room'.

What was this supposed to be? M-Me, a concerned soldier?! This cannot be! This is ridiculous!

Damn it, I feel so sorry for myself. There was something wrong with the training rifle when I used it! If it was working fine, then I could've set the world record and make everyone fall back in shock!

Recruit Pencolt looked at the bed and he seemed to pretend that he wasn't also a concerned soldier but he only became my roommate because he had no other choice.

"Shotgun on the lower bunk! It's a bother to climb to the upper one! Btw, do you snore?"

"I don't."

"Then I'm taking the lower one. Complaints?"

"No. Ah, Pencolt, why did you enlist in the military? And why did the Replicants in our platoon enlist?"

If the Federation looked down on the Replicants, then they shouldn't have enlisted. I couldn't understand why they would go out of their way to enlist when there wasn't a conscription system.

"Have you really been living under a rock? Don't you even know what the current Fed's like?"

Pencolt asked in surprise.

"No, I don't know. So tell me."

"You do know that the Fed separates the planets by Supervisional, Autonomical and Pioneered, yeah?"

"Well, I know that much."

Supervisional planets were under direct control of the Federation Government, Autonomical planets by their own government, and Pioneered planets were planets that were without a government after a process of terraforming.

"Pioneered planets and Autonomical planets are like country towns that are conservative of their old customs. You know how all youngsters want to live in the busy city rather than a country town?"

"Well, yeah. That trend can be found in the history of the human race."

"So a lot of youngsters want to come to the city, but the Supervisional planets are suffering from high unemployment rates because of that, man. So the only way for youngsters to land a job while still being in the cities is to enlist in the armed forces."

Hmm, hearing Pencolt saying things like that, this guy seemed to be a lot more knowledgeable unlike his looks.

"Did you also enlist for the job?"

"No, I already had a job, man. I was a hard working part of the economy unlike many others here."

"So why did you come?"

"Uu hu hu. Don't you know that the Supervisional planets under the Fed's control has a gender ratio of 10 females to 6 males~? I thought I would be able to experience a rosy youth by coming here."

"....."

I don't usually sweat, but I could feel sweat running down my back. Why did I have to end up with someone like him as a roommate?

"Lights out! Everyone turn off your lights!"

Since the lights went off in the barracks, I climbed up onto the upper bunk and lay there. Pencolt also climbed onto his bed, but his great weight made the bed creak. This should've been a bunk bed made out of 45T reinforced metal pipes welded together, but I was worried that this might snap.

"They say that this platoon will be deployed as human shields onto the battlefield, but are you not afraid?"

"Hu hu. That's what I'm actually aiming for, man."

"Huh?"

"Asa and Elcro girls are all hot. I want to go out onto the battlefields and meet them soon. Both of their race have higher women to men ratios, and with the war going on, won't there even be less males? Don't you reckon?"

"..."

I could feel cold sweat running down my back again.... No, I can't. The bed will get wet.

I had to stay up all night that day, wondering whether or not I should strangle that snoring Pencolt's neck.

03. Legend of the Greenie

Six weeks of basic training was just enough training to give the soldiers enough skills to adapt to any type of situation. Those who excelled and displayed extraordinary talent during this training were transferred to specialized training facilities, promoted to Petty Officers or Cadets, and received further training.

Although I was a Vice Admiral, I was extremely well versed in an ordinary soldier's training and other requirements, since I was a former instructor. From security, to support, to administration: I wasn't lacking in any of them!

And soon, they will realise my true value, even if I'm being treated like a greenie right now!

...Is what I thought.



There was emergency maintenance training on the armoured cars, called Spiders, in the morning.

The multi-purpose Spider was a four legged armoured car with wheels attached to each of its legs, thus it was able to travel along normal roads, and could scale haphazard terrain with its legs. On top of all that, it was able to carry a sizeable load.

The Spider given to us for training was just about ready to be scrapped, but nevertheless, we had to train about how to deal with different types of unwieldy movement and breakdowns.

The other recruits tried first and....

I was the last one to lay my hands on the armoured car, right after Pencolt.

What did that mean?

"Ku ku ku.... You poor greenie. They've put you last thinking that you might break it, man!"

Recruit Pencolt held the trainers' PCB (printed circuit board) and turned around to look at me pitifully.

Hey, if I'm a greenie, then you're also a greenie, you know? Don't look down on me like that, when you're one too! But why am I going after this guy?! Does that mean I'm more of a greenie than him?

"Take a good look, and be amazed at my skill that is greater than yours! Hah?"

...Was what Recruit Pencolt said, but after 10 minutes of working on the armoured car; Spider, and replacing its PCB, he electrocuted himself by touching a capacitor.

As the other Recruits carried Recruit Pencolt away, Sergeant Aroha signalled to me with her hand while holding the PCB. She signalled to me like one would a pet.

'Geez, to think that a Petty Officer would treat me like this, while I am still alive!'

To think that she would treat me like a pet, when I should be honoured as the heavenly Vice Admiral, that I am. It was certain that she was looking down on me, but that playful smile of hers was strangely enchanting. Should I describe that as cute or overflowing with sexiness?

"Cough, cough.... What's the matter, Sergeant?"

"Hey Lezirth? If you don't go wrong this time, I'll show you my breasts."

"What? Who do you think you're talking to!"

Wow, I really got angry just now! People thought of me as a troublemaker and a greenie, so doing that was no different as someone saying 'I'll give you a candy, so behave'!

"Ah, so that won't work. I see you've got some determination in you."

Sergeant Aroha smiled brightly and slapped my back loudly with her hand.

"Great! That's a good attitude! Do your best, Lezirth!"

She slightly winked and pushed me at the armoured car.

"W-Well, I'm not saying that I wouldn't look if you were to show me them.... Tsk."

Listen to me until I finish talking! But since there was no point in talking about it any further, I grumbled and walked towards the SAV (Spider Armored Vehicle).

After inspecting the PCB first, I stuck my hand inside the armoured car.

“Why would you replace the PCB? You can just bypass it. You can’t wait for a new PCB to be replaced while a battle is raging on. Witness my skills, honed through countless battles, rather than military school!”

“Huh?”

All of the recruits looked at me dumbfounded as they saw what I was doing.

I loosened a few wires and connected them over the broken area, bypassing them in the process.

Then, Spider suddenly sprang to life! The generator worked up momentum, and with a whirring noise, it started to stand up like a dead organism coming back to life.

Hm. Take a gander at that, you fools! This is what I, a Vice Admiral, can do! I didn’t earn three stars just by playing around!

“Wow... he’s really fast.”

“Everyone took around 10 minutes, but he did it in 7 seconds...”

“Is he a genius?”

Everyone finally recognised my skills and started to admire me.

But then.

—Woooon

The Spider-mounted, crowd control rockets came to life.

Huh? What? Isn’t the Spider looking at the Recruits right now?

—Recognizing target. Foe: Replicant Rebels! Commencing attack!

“... Huh?”

“What’s going on?”

The recruits looked at the Spider with dumbfounded expressions.

I tried to switch off the Spider at once, but the armoured car launched its attack first. Numerous plastic lids from the rocket pods flew out and covered the Recruits.

Luckily, the rockets were not loaded, but nevertheless, the lids hit the Recruits and things became chaotic. Furthermore, the Spider recognised it didn’t have any rockets loaded, so it raised its front leg and tried to commence physical attacks.

“Tsk!”

I clung onto the runaway armoured car and stopped its movements by pulling out the PCB. As it was about to stomp on the Recruits, the Spider became still.

“Phew, that was too close for comfort. I think I overlooked the training routine by bypassing. But this machine... something doesn’t seem right with it. Is anyone hurt?”

I jumped off the Spider, landed gracefully and explained myself to the Recruits about what just happened.

However, those Recruits eyed me with a suspicious look.

“Huh? What’s wrong everyone? Huh? Haah?”

Shortly after, I had to decide whether I wanted to be jailed or give up free periods for a week and clean out the training shed.



When I walked into the kitchen and took a tray, everyone’s attention was fixed solely on me. And when I sat down at the table after getting my food, the Recruits around me glanced at me and moved somewhere else.

"Hmm, if they're moving their seats while eating, this must be some kind of a new game. A flash mob, was it? Yes, it must be that flash mob play."

I looked around at them in puzzlement.

At that moment, Recruit Pencolt came and sat across me with piles of fried food on his plate.

"Tsk, tsk, I feel sorry for you, man. Aren't you being bullied by everyone cuz of your mess?"

"Huh? What are you saying? There's no way I could ever get bullied!"

I was the one who lead the Dawn Corps and had companies asking me to be featured in commercials. I obviously refused as I was a militant, but I was often featured on military-related advertisements.

There's no way that I, who was loved by soldiers, cadets and officers alike could ever be bullied!

"Hu hu hu. People can't accept the reality at the start, man. I know, because I've experienced it. But the time will come when you realise everyone's hateful gaze."

"..."

"And to prepare yourself for that time, I'll give you this. It's something precious, so be grateful, alright? It's something that you can't buy with money these days."

Pencolt rummaged through his pocket and handed me something like a key-ring. Inspecting what was handed to me, it turned out to be a key-ring of an anime-like chibi character who had her pink hair in a twin-tail, winking.

"What's this?"

"It's Misha from Love Love Angels. Misha is nice enough to be called an angel, so she won't forsake you even if the world does."

While I didn't like the fact that he thought the entire world was going to be against me, I assumed that he had good intentions behind his words. But geez, this guy really gets on my nerves. Why does he tick me off this much?

"Hah.... Um, I guess t-thanks. But why are you giving something like this to me?"

He did have strange tastes, but I could tell that he was worried about me. I'm not interested in something like this, but I suppose I should accept it gratefully.

But shouldn't something like this be valuable among collectors? Why is he giving this to me for free?

"Ah, because Misha-chan kissed someone else in a recent TV anime adaption. I don't need a woman who plays around with other men apart from me, man. It doesn't matter how nice a girl is if she doesn't have a set mindset. Isn't it the best when I get to cheat but the woman doesn't?"

"...."

I-I want to move seats as well.

But looking around the place, all of the Recruits were glaring at Pencolt and I. If I take my plate and move somewhere else, the others will move as well, right? What should I do?

Then, someone else sat next to me.

"H-Hello, Lezirth. Do you mind me sitting next to you?"

"Ah~?"

I stopped myself as I tried to salute her out of reflex. The shortly-cut brown haired girl with golden eyes was blushing furiously with her head bowed down as she sat next to me, holding onto the seat cover.

That girl was the Chief of Staff and Admiral Luise Maynard, who also woke up into this time period after being induced in 120 years of cold sleep like me.

"Something that you liked must've been on the menu if you're staring at the plate so intensely. Do you like apple jellies?"

"N-No... um, I don't dislike them."

She smiled brightly. Her brown hair shined like gold when the Epiece light shone through the windows and warmly embraced her back.

Without realising it, I forgot all about my manners and started to look at her in wonder.

Suddenly, Pencolt got overly excited and started to snort like an animal.

“Wow! A beauty!”

Seeing him snort, huff and puffing like that reminded me of a bull just about ready to charge at a bullfighter. He really seemed to be reaching out for her, so I blocked Pencolt and Chief Luise by extending my arm between them.

“Ah, don’t worry. This person is my roommate.”

“I-I see. Hello, my name is Luise Maynard.”

“Wow! Ain’t she quite a beauty? Lezirth, who? Someone you know? Older sister? Younger sister? Cousin?”

“Ehh, so....”

How should I explain this to him?

Then, Chief Luise answered him with an uncertain voice.

“W-We’re friends. Friends.”

“Don’t tell me childhood friends? Like ever since you were young? Can I call you Luise?”

“No!”

I refuse! I blocked Pencolt. And Pencolt glared at me.

“Hmph! I bid you farewell.”

“...”

“Heh heh, don’t wet your pants now, I’m only kidding. Haven’t I already given you my old woman, my friend? This is how generous I am, and our friendship will never change, man. Our friendship lasts forever~ my brother.”

For that moment, I was really ashamed of myself.

When he said ‘Hmph! I bid you farewell,’ I was actually worried for a moment. The thought of being all by myself in this world filled my head.

It was only for a moment though.

But now that he’s said that our friendship lasts forever~, I didn’t like that either. Ah, these complexities of a human’s mind.

“That aside, how is the gravity adaptation training?”

“Mhmm, calcium isn’t leaking out because I have medical nano-machines in my bones, but I am lacking in muscle.... So I have been doing rehabilitation activities such as swimming.”

Chief Luise smiled at me after she said that.

“How about yourself, Lezirth? I trust you are coping well?”

“No.... well, you see...”

The current King of Greenies in our platoon is me.

Is what I should say, but I couldn’t bring myself to say that.

The others didn’t know about my three-star days. So making a mistake in front of them was just an ordinary occurrence, but Chief Luise knew about my previous life.

“How I envy you. I wish I could be more like a soldier like you, Lezirth.”

I let out a long sigh, trying not to be caught in the process of doing so while Chief Luise admired me.

This is no good. I wasn’t lying on purpose, but it would be cruel to let her think otherwise. I believed it was worse to hide any shame or any mistakes rather than committing them.

“To tell the truth, I have not been acting like a true soldier as of late.”

“Huh?”

"I am ashamed to inform you that I have been referred to as a greenie in this platoon."

"A greenie?"

"It is a nickname that the other Recruits have given me due to me being still green behind the ears. I have been troubling my peers."

Now that I've said that, I was too ashamed to raise my head. Wordlessly, I forked away at my food and hung my head low.

"Be at ease, Ms. Luise. I'm taking care of Lezirth, so you may address me, Pencolt, as oppa. If you don't flow with oppa, you can use oppan, ooppa, great brother, exalted brother, brother, bro or whatever floats your boat."

"Ah! T-Thank you."

Admiral Luise Maynard politely bowed her head to the unpleasant Pencolt, who was only a mere Recruit. Hey Pencolt, I see that you're accepting her thanks like a big shot, but when was I ever in your care?

"Lezirth."

"..."

Chief Luise grabbed my arm and inspected my expression. I raised up my head and looked at her.

"If something like this happens again, please consult it with me. We now only have each other in this world..."

"Yes, understood. I will abide by your orders."

When I nodded my head, she extended her finger towards me.

"It is not an order, but a promise."

"A promise?"

"Yes, now link your finger to mine."

Admiral Luise Maynard was smiling brightly. The sight of her with the bright light shining on her back would've been blinding even without the light source.

I wrapped my pinky finger around her soft finger.

“Good. I won’t forgive you if you go against your promise, so prepare yourself. Hee hee.”

Why does she appear to be happy? Don’t tell me Chief Luise actually planned ahead and wants to punish me with this promise? What did I do to her to deserve this punishment?

“Yes, of course! I wouldn’t dare to go against your orders!”

“Geez, I’m telling you it’s a promise.”

She pouted out her lips and started her meal after setting her eyes back on the plate.

Nothing changed from the conversation I just had with her. However, I felt better for some reason. It was truly amazing. I could feel warmth spreading from inside my chest to my hands and face.



After making that promise with Admiral Luise, I stopped trying to prove myself in training. That was because I thought I was messing up because I was trying to prove myself and rushed things.

It’s no secret that I’ve been holding onto my past as a war hero and tried to prove that fact. But now that I’ve reflected on it, wasn’t that something pathetic?

So I quietly completed a week of training.

And my punishment from that armoured car Spider incident ended some time then as well.

The training shed was not a robot maintained one, but of pure manpower, so cleaning it out was quite a chore.

I finally was able to finish the week of punishment after being charged with the duty because of my modified Spider attacking other Recruits.

"I guess my punishment ends with this. Whew, I still can't accept that I'm a greenie... but I somehow I finished without a hitch."

I sighed and looked around the shed. Lit up with some LED lighting, the shed measured 20m by 10m in shape and consisted of numerous cabinets.

After inspecting the shed, I turned off the light. And as I was about to leave, I heard someone's voice.

"Wait Meihowa! Wait up!"

"If that was all that you had to say, then I will take my leave."

Hmm? Was it Ensign Meihowa? Then who was the other person?

It was awkward to step outside, so I waited without opening the shed door. I only did so because I thought they might leave for somewhere else. So it was strictly not because I wanted to eavesdrop on their private matters out of interest.

However, they started to talk behind this shed's wall unlike my expectations.

"Meihowa, you will no longer be in the world of the living after 6 weeks if things continue this way. Listen to me. The platoon you lead is full of failures."

"And it is my duty as a leader to train them to a level where they will be able to survive somehow. It is also your duty as well, sir."

Ensign Meihowa's voice was stern. She seemed to hate the other male with a passion. She was talking to him like he was a mouse, cockroach or some other pest.

"But am I not a male and you a female? There is something called relationship between both se..."

The male's voice was obsequious and sticky. What was with this guy?

"I do not think of you as someone of the opposite gender, Lieutenant, sir."

I see. The other person was Lieutenant Imamura; one of the instructors in the Cadet Academy. I do remember seeing him every now and then while walking along.... Hmm. I do remember him being a married man, but is he flirting with Meihowa? Don't tell me they share an affair... there's no way, right? I mean, if Meihowa dislikes it that much?

"Don't be like that.... If I use my powers a bit, you can get away from that group of failures, Ensign Meihowa. Is it not better than wasting your life on the battlefield? Did you not seduce me because you knew of it?"

"I never seduced you, Lieutenant, sir. On the contrary, were you not the one who has been sexually harassing me all this time?"

Meihowa's stern voice. Lieutenant Imamura's voice started to quaver.

"Then what about those presents I left on your door? Huh? Were you not the one who seduced me first? Are you not tempting me right now with that gaze, that attitude and those fingers?"

"What? But my hand is staying still. And about those presents you mentioned, I handed in all of them at the office. I informed them to return the presents to the owners. Please do not leave any presents in front of my door. If you continue to, I will report you for stalking."

"Haahh! Don't lie to yourself. You like me! Even though I am married, that is. Have you grown cold about me after seducing me like that?"

"Please let go of me. I'll call someone."

Ensign Meihowa's voice grew urgent. Now wasn't the time to continue listening to them. I tried not to leave because I would become an eavesdropper, but the Platoon Leader was in danger! Wasn't this a typical stalking situation!

Judging the situation, I slammed the shed door open.

When I went outside, the sight was quite something to see. Lieutenant Imamura was wearing an expression fit for a psychopath and was pinning Meihowa to the wall by force, while clutching her wrist.

Both of them had an expression that said they were taken aback by my sudden appearance.

“W-What? Just a Recruit? Hurry back to your barracks, Recruit. Don’t butt into the situ...”

“Don’t make me laugh. And you’re supposed to be a Lieutenant!”

Grabbing onto Lieutenant Imamura’s collar, I lifted him up. He writhed in surprise, but I planted a punch into his abdomen and silenced him.

“Lezirth!”

I placed Lieutenant Imamura onto the floor. There was a chance of him snapping his neck and dying if I dropped him while he was unconscious. I had to follow the correct procedures as this wasn’t the battle field—even if it meant I was dealing with a joke of a Lieutenant.

“Ensign Meihowa, are you alright?”

“No... what... sigh.”

Meihowa must’ve been confused as to what just unfolded before her eyes, because she sighed and covered her face with her hands.

“Why did you do that! Recruit Lezirth! You’re just a Replicant! Are you even aware of the consequences if you lay even a finger on pure blooded Earthlings? And how could you hurt a Lieutenant when you are but a Recruit!?”

I tilted my head in wonder as I couldn’t understand her concern.

“Then Ensign Meihowa, did you actually like this Lieutenant?”

“W-What kind of a joke is that! Not at all!”

“So, I’m not mistaken in thinking that he was bothering you when you didn’t like him?”

“T-That’s obvious!”

Meihowa nodded her head.

“Then what I did was correct! Well, while I do agree that my way of dealing with him was slightly overkill, it feels great to do something right!”

“Sigh, you really are... thoughtless.”

She sighed, walked into the shed I walked out of and sat on top of a canned food box. And she signalled me to sit by hitting on the space next to her.

“Come sit over here, Lezirth.”

“OK. Sure.”

While looking at Lieutenant Imamura sprawled out on the floor, she asked.

“He shouldn’t wake up for a while, right? How could you lift up a fully grown man like that with a single arm and punch him in the abdomen with the other? On a 103% gravity level planet at that? Are you really not a Fortified Cyborg?”

“Well, while not dead, he shouldn’t be able to wake up so quickly. I didn’t feel anything bursting when I punched him, but who knows. His appendix might have burst.”

“What?”

“Ah, don’t worry. Seeing as he isn’t giving off cold sweat and is fast asleep, it didn’t burst.”

Ensign Meihowa finally sighed in relief. As she did, the black wings on her back fluttered slightly and gave off particles of light. The sight was reminiscent of silver powder sparkling in the wind.

“Well... I suppose I should thank you. Thank you.”

“Not at all. It’s only my duty as your subordinate to rescue my Platoon Leader. But why didn’t you report someone like him to the Superior Office if he continued to bother you? Don’t tell me you actually dated him before or something like that?”

At my question, Meihowa appeared to be quite shocked.

“I was placed in this academy only two weeks ago after completing my Naval Cadet training. Do you really think I would have the time to have an affair when I’m still fresh to this academy like Recruits like yourself? It’s just some common treatment I receive as a half Elcro.”

“Half Elcro...”

“That’s right.”

She buried her head between her knees and let out a sigh.

Seeing her like that piqued my interest. Why would a half Elcro want to become a Commissioned Officer?

“Hey, you mentioned that I’ll be having my meals through a straw if I ask anything more about your private matters before, right? Is that still valid?”

“Huh?”

Meihowa quickly raised her head from between her knees. There were slight traces of teardrops smudged under her green eyes.

However, there weren’t enough traces on her white make-up free skin to assume that she actually cried. So did she yawn or something? She can’t be actually sad and crying from that, right?

“Y-You know. While it’s true that I’m just asking because of my curiosity... but I think it would be nice if you can share it with someone. If you start talking, then maybe you’ll have some stress relief.”

“*Sigh....* To hear that from a greenie like you. Well, OK. I’ll tell you.”

Shaking her foot while seated on the canned food box, she looked at me.

“If you really are the late Lezirth Dawnbringer who was killed in action 120 years ago, then you might not know about the war between the Elcros. I’ll assume that for now and tell you, so you better listen carefully.”

“I’m telling you I’m not dead.”

“My biological and legal father participated in the Elcro War and captured a female Elcro as a slave. And he... Commander Riwoo Kwanshin was already married. But bearing a love child with a female Elcro slave is a right given to a militant.”

“What?”

I was revolted. Even when I was active, many male militants died during the war with Letix, so the gender ratio was out of proportion. As a result, many people did commit adultery while still being married.

But even then, they still could separate right from wrong. And now people were enslaving creatures from completely different species and committing adultery?

“A female Elcro is nothing but a slave to them. Even now, female Elcro captives are highly sought after by the top officials. So the Lieutenant must’ve thought of me as an easy target.”

“Holy hell. Things are really rotten to the core. Just what did the government do while the Federation rotted away like that?”

“Don’t you already know the Federation and the government go hand in hand? They were crazy about capturing Elcro slaves. Unlike the war with Letix, where there was no money to be made, Elcros were a perfect target as they had a civilisation similar to humans and they could even vent out their sexual urges. There were so many things to be gained from the Elcros. Military supply chains profited from the war, while the government used the war as an excuse to strengthen their hold on the citizens while the Federation expanded their influence. They are all in it together.”

After speaking, she smirked.

“I really do feel better after talking it out. But geez... what should we do with that?”

She rested her eyes on the knocked out Lieutenant Imamura.

“I suppose it would be a stretch to report it to the higher ups to have it taken care of?”

“That would be difficult. I am only an Elcro while you’re a Replicant Recruit. Furthermore, this may sound silly for me to say this as a hopeful Commissioned Officer. But the military’s ranking system is a mess. However, as this incident was caused because of me, I will sort it out myself.”

“Huh? Do you have any plans?”

“If I take this upon myself, no harm should come to you. I can’t let a greenie like you also take the blame.”

Meihowa jumped off the canned food box and landed on the ground. Surprised, I also jumped off the box.

"No, that's not right. And why was this incident your fault, Ensign Meihowa? You didn't do anything wrong! It is this guy's fault for abusing his powers to his subordinates!"

"When you're just a greenie..."

"Huh?"

What was she trying to say?

While in my slight moment of hesitation, Ensign Meihowa looked at me over her shoulders and smiled cheerfully.

"I feel great, having you cheer for me... when you're just a greenie. Thanks."

"..."

I felt like something just dropped inside my heart with a clang. Something like a pot falling and shattering type of feel, maybe?

'I'll be back, Vice Admiral. I was glad to be part of the Dawn Corps. If I come back alive, please take me out for some drinks.'

I was reminded of my soldiers who were deployed while embracing death itself.

Those soldiers who were so playful but left serious wills behind. Their blinding smiles that were bright as the stars despite their unkempt clothes. I was reminded of them for some reason.

Why did I think of their death embraced smiles when I saw her smile?

"But don't worry. I may not look it, but I'm still the daughter of a Commander. I won't even stay for a long time if I do end up being sent to jail. You don't need to worry about me."

She was prepared to sacrifice herself. Just like my soldiers long ago.

"No."

I clenched tightly onto her sleeve. And from her sleeve, I moved up to her elbow then her collar as she stood in surprise. I held her collar tightly and locked her movements.

“W-What is it? Recruit Lezirth?”

Ensign Meihowa seemed to be slightly fearful.

“Ensign Meihowa, there is no need for you to sacrifice yourself. If you do as I say, it should work out.”

“Huh?”

I explained my plan to her as she was still shocked. She seemed to be half agreeing and half disagreeing to my plan, but when I urged her firmly, she agreed to it.

“S-Should it work out if we do that?”

Still hesitant, she tilted her head left and right.

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Breathing coarsely, Lieutenant Imamura searched every nook and cranny of the barracks. I hung upside down under the bunk bed and waited for him to move away without finding me.

Shortly after, Lieutenant Imamura gasped for breath like a wounded boar and walked outside. Only then could I crawl out from under the bed.

“Whew, he’s gone. Just what’s going on, man?”

My roommate Pencolt asked while munching on a large slab of chocolate.

“You don’t need to know.”

“Really? He asked me where this guy by the name of Lezirth Dawnbringer was... so I told him he’s near the entrance of the academy, man.”

“The entrance of the academy?”

“Isn’t there the statue?”

“...”

So, this guy told him where the statue of Lezirth Dawnbringer, the General of the Dawn Corps? Sure, I was that very Lezirth Dawnbringer, General of the Dawn Corps, but I’m pretty sure Lieutenant Imamura was looking for Lezirth Dawnbringer the Recruit.

This Pencolt fellow was really something else.

“He wouldn’t really go to the entrance even if he’s stupid, right?”

“Who knows, man. If he’s a Lieutenant playing around in a base, then don’t you reckon he’ll be beyond stupid? Do not limit your imagination, young one.”

After saying that, Pencolt gobbled up the slab of chocolate by himself.

Someone with some common sense would offer some chocolate even out of an insincere heart, so how dare you eat all of that!

But without a doubt, Pencolt was losing weight rapidly even though he ate like this. I suppose it’s because the training is too difficult and straining on him.

Well~ I was more concerned about Ensign Meihowa rather than eating.

Ensign Meihowa told Lieutenant Imamura that she will give some recordings of their conversation when he tried to hit on her, to his wife, if he continues to bother her in the future (I made her do it).

Of course, Meihowa had no such audio or video recording, but a stingy person like the Lieutenant would be easily tricked by such trick.

As a result, Lieutenant Imamura was hot on my trails to take out his anger on me since he couldn’t bother Meihowa. So I’ve been hiding in places where it would be difficult to find me.

“You’ve got some mad skills, man. How can ya hide like that? Like hanging off the ceiling and that?”

“Well, I’m quite fit and agile.”

At that moment, I could hear a wolf-like howl resounding from the outside. Epiece-2, where this academy was located, was not a naturally habitable planet, so there was no way a wolf could exist here.

It seemed like that stupid Lieutenant actually went to the entrance and realised his stupidity after seeing the statue.

“He’s really beyond all imagination.”

Lieutenant Imamura’s stupidity was beyond me.

People really shouldn’t limit their imagination. Because imagination is limitless.

04. Special Care Soldier of the Azoran System

A single rotation of the Epiece-2 Planet took 34 hours. Hence, we had to wake up in the middle of the night or the middle of the day, if we were to abide by the Federation's 24 hours system.

Although, this planet's 34 hour days were far too long.

"It doesn't matter, doesn't it? After all, we can do some night-time exercises during our training period."

Wearing a pair of night-vision goggles, fibre helmet and a bullet-proof vest, I left the barracks first. Sergeant Aroha, who was doing squats and running beforehand, greeted me with a smile when she saw me.

"My~ who would've thought the King of Greenies would come out first?"

"I'm not a King of Greenies, Sergeant."

Sergeant Aroha looked around then suddenly approached and grabbed both of my hands.

"I... heard that you saved our Platoon Leader. Thank you, greenie."

"Ah, well... I-I only did what anyone should've done."

It seemed like Sergeant Aroha was quite close to Ensign Meihowa. Did Meihowa speak about what happened that time?

I suppose their positions would be similar as Ensign Meihowa was a Half-Elcro, while Sergeant Aroha was a Half-Asa. Although, there was that difference of Elcros being enslaved by the higher ups of the office as concubines, while the Asas took male hostages and enslaved them—just like the Amazons.

Hence, if Elcros were the weak race that anyone could have their way with, Asas were the lustful and wild race that chased after men.

Sergeant Aroha must have her own fair share of troubles.

"I'm so grateful, I'll specially drop the 'King' from the King of Greenies. I'll let you off the hook with just 'Greenie'"

"I suppose things would've been worse if you weren't grateful."

I smiled bitterly at the cheerful Sergeant Aroha. She suddenly licked her lips and brought her face closer to mine.

"By the way, what's the deal between you and Luise?"

"Ehh!"

Something came in contact with my ears and tickled me while her breath stimulated my cheeks.

But those physical touches aside, her voice was so enchanting. That sweet voice compelled me to imagine drops of honey sliding down a smooth, golden glass jug.

"Ah you mean my relationship with M-Miss Luise?"

"That's right. You treat your Platoon Leader, Sergeant and other officers like dirt, yet you are so respectful to her alone. So what is it? Is Luise some daughter of a billionaire, while you're her butler? A forbidden relationship between a servant and his mistress? Sort of like a story straight out of a romantic novel?"

"Hmm, you could say that. I cannot go into details."

"Hmm, is that so? You're quite a strange one. You don't show any respect to your seniors, yet you're respectful to your fellow recruit."

Sergeant Aroha smirked. It was somewhat mischievous. Was she planning something?

"So he says."

"Huh?"

When I turned around, I saw a girl who was dressed in the same way as me—wearing the helmet, bullet-proof vest and night-vision goggles. She held up herself tiredly, with her shoulders slumping.

"Ehh?! M-Miss.... Luise?!"

"Umm. H-Hi, Lezirth. I-I finished my gravity adaptation course, so I will be participating in the training. Since w-we're part of the same platoon."

"Ah, really? That's great. You got used to it fast, didn't you?"

"Well.... I am a 'Replicant' just like you, Lezirth."

To be precise, she means the 'Children of Letix' that possess the medical nano-machines, self-recovery, telekinesis and telepathy.

If an ordinary human or an ordinary Replicant approached me from behind, I would've noticed for sure. However, Chief Luise had far superior telepathy and psychological strength to make up for her lack of physical strength. She even had powers that I didn't, such as clairvoyance.

So that means she approached me unnoticed on purpose, but why? Did she want to hear what I was talking about with Sergeant Aroha?

I would've told Chief Luise anything, if she asked me though. She sure is a playful person.

Thinking that, I stood by her side.

"Why don't you pair up with me? I will pour out my body and soul to help you."

"Yes, please work with me. I'm so happy. I can finally work with you, after doing all that gravity adaptation therapy by myself."

The bitter expression that Chief Luise had until now disappeared without a trace and she smiled.

"Oh hoo, Luise-cha~n, I'll follow you to the ends of the universe~"

I didn't know he was already out, but Pencolt was huffing and puffing next to us. I let out a sigh.

"Yeah, thinking about it, you're the only other person I can rely on, now that I've been branded as a greenie."

"Hmm? Have you already given up? A man must not give up so easily, man! I kept on approaching the soldier chicks without givin' up!"

"Oh really, now."

Now that he mentioned it, the female recruits were eyeing us coldly. Just what did this guy do?

While wondering that, the Platoon Leader Ensign Meihowa appeared. She wore an Alter-Armour pilot suit with a bullet-proof vest and a groin guard over it.

I suppose it was obvious to wear the bullet-proof vest and the groin guard, because without them the suit was far too revealing—especially in the chest and lower area.

"Are we going to be using Alter-Armours?"

"What? Didn't the training just kick it up a notch?"

Murmurs resounded throughout the recruits.

Everyone was nervous. Even I thought the training was out of whack. This felt like a mixed martial arts training.

This was training that was far too dangerous for new recruits, and should've been practiced only by the trainers near the end of their training period. It was usually only the qualified soldiers who carried out such training.

However, Ensign Meihowa's expression told us that she was not joking.

"Hmm... I first have to apologize to the entire platoon."

"What?"

"What is the matter?"

The recruits became curious.

"Our platoon's... training schedule has been modified. We will be boarding the Assault Cruiser at 0900 Federation standard, receive real military equipment, and

then head to the Azoran System. After completing 4 weeks of mixed martial arts training on Azoran-3, we will then be transferred to Azoran-4.”

“N-No way!!!”

Everyone screamed out in despair.

Azoran-3 of the Azoran System originally belonged to the Elcros, but the Federation drove them out and conquered the planet.

While Azoran-3 was under the Federation’s full control, Azoran-4 still belonged to the Elcros. Not only that, the rebel forces of the Federation were cooperating with the Elcros, and they were putting up quite a fight.

In other words, it was not surprising to see the other recruits go pale, when they heard that they were going to be fighting on the front lines after such little training.

Pencolt raised up his hand in surprise.

“Platoon Leader! What about our personal belongings? Doesn’t this mean that we’re being evicted from this training centre?”

“I hear that your personal belongings will be shipped by the officers here.”

“Ugh! That’s no good! All my figures are gonna get smashed! What would they know ‘bout my figures and plastic models! They gotta be carefully packed in cases...”

“I do not know. I do not want to, either.”

Meihowa sighed. Even she must’ve thought that this order came from Lieutenant Imamura out of spite.

Hmm, but a Lieutenant usually doesn’t have the authority to order such a thing.

But for this to happen, it must mean that the discrimination against the Replicants, Asas and Elcros was accepted by the top brass.

“So now, I am officially Ensign Liu Meihowa. It is a bit embarrassing, but let’s do our best.”

“YES, MA’AM!”

Everyone saluted her.

Although I couldn’t say that this was a proper platoon, I could say that this suicidal platoon accepted Ensign Meihowa as an excellent leader. After all, even I saluted her.



In a real battle situation, Platoon Leader Ensign Meihowa would be permitted to use the lowest grade Alter-Armour. The Spider would be provided to the Sub-Platoon Leader; Sergeant Aroha, while the recruits would be equipped with Colion Coil Rifles and M-10 Bayonets.

The Alter-Armour, Spider, and rifles used in the training facility were outdated, but all the equipment handed out at the military airport were brand new.

We are now headed to a battlefield with our lives on the line.

“Whoaa! Colion Coil Rifles, 180 version! Awesome! I always wanted one of these.”

“So it’s not that new then. It’s 189 right now, isn’t it?”

9 years had passed, but guns could be used for 100 years without much issue. If these were stored in the storehouse for 9 years after being manufactured, then they certainly were new.

Didn’t these recruits understand what this meant? Some recruits were really out of their minds.

Watching the Assault Cruiser outside of the window, I let out a sigh. [I was not familiar with the ship, and compared to a 150m long Spaceship, the Assault cruiser was far smaller]. Could it be a new model?

“I don’t think I’ve seen that type of a ship before. Is it a new model?”

“As if they would be new; they’ve been around for at least 60 years. It’s a Scorpion-E mid-sized Assault Cruiser.”

Sergeant Aroha laughed as she fiddled around with the Spider she received.

“Even this Spider is a bit more advanced than the version created 130 years ago. And while I can understand you being cool as a cucumber, Luise is unnervingly calm. She didn’t look the type to be so tough.”

Sergeant Aroha asked me after seeing Chief Luise next to me.

Isn’t that obvious? Although she did appear to be a weak, beautiful girl, she was the Chief of Staff! The Space Federation’s greatest mind who led and oversaw its every mission!

“Because Lezirth is by my side.”

Chief Luise smiled brightly.

Sergeant Aroha squealed and covered her face with both of her hands. She was really into it.

“Ohhh, look at her.... She’s so cute. B-But this isn’t good. Ensign Meihowa is my best friend, but Luise is my roommate. Hmm... whose side should I stick to?”

What was this girl saying? Don’t tell me even Sergeant Aroha went mad from the pressure of stepping onto the battlefield?

“Cut it out, Aroha. Just what are you saying?”

Wearing the Alter-Armour piloting suit and chewing the energy gel between her lips, the silver haired girl was approaching us.

Energy gel had a lot of benefits, such as fast absorption rate, rehydration and electrolyte supplements, so it was supplied as snacks in the military. The one Meihowa was eating was... the crab flavoured energy gel—as written on the package.

Hmm, her taste buds must be quite amazing. No, do those flavours even sell? Aren’t they more of a novelty?

“Ah, Platoon Leader Meihowa!”

Aroha smiled and looked at Meihowa, only to notice that the girl wasn't wearing the bullet-proof vest or a groin guard. So Aroha shooed me away.

"Could you look the other way?"

"Ah... Of course."

I could see Meihowa's figure clearly, thanks to the tight suit that accentuated her curves. Usually it was hard to take notice because of her rough personality, but she was quite feminine.

Thinking that my gaze might trouble her, I looked away. However, Meihowa approached us because she had something to say to Chief Luise and I.

"You two... you both achieved cadet level results in the academic placement test, right? Why don't we measure your Alter-Armour aptitude?"

"Alter-Armour aptitude?"

I ended up smirking. Chief Luise and I were both pilots of Kishin-Class Alter-Armours. The 'Dawnbringer' of Lezirth Dawnbringer and 'Tetragrammaton' of Luise Maynard were the most famous Kishins of the Space Federation.

And yet she's telling us that she wants to test our aptitude.... I couldn't help but laugh.

"If I am killed in action, which frees up my Alter-Armour, then someone else has to use it in my place. I am considering you two for that job."

My smile wiped clean off my face. Why was this lady so determined?

But it was certainly something that should be considered as a leader. Sergeant Aroha interrupted us then.

"Usually, you'd have to be at least a Sergeant or Ensign to pilot an Alter-Armour. But if we register you to control the Alter-Armour after her death, you will be able to temporarily operate it. If you can't, I can do it, and I will if your aptitudes are lower than mine."

I glanced at Chief Luise just in case.

“Should we agree to the aptitude test?”

“Of course. We should abide by Platoon Leader Liu’s will.”

“Call me Meihowa. I don’t prefer... being called Liu.”

Saying that, Ensign Meihowa made a bitter expression. It should’ve been obvious to us that she wouldn’t like her father’s surname.

“Ah, yes, Platoon Leader Meihowa.”

We followed after Meihowa and headed to the Alter-Armour warehouse.

The Alter-Armour provided to Meihowa was a small ground-combat type, measuring 10 meters in height with a humanoid shape—fitted with two arms, two legs and a head.

However, this Alter-Armour’s essence was similar to a Letix. Its inside was muscular, while a special protective layer covered its surface; somewhat like a crustacean.

The Federation equipped Alter-Armours of this type with weapons and armour, using them as standard weapons. Ensign Meihowa’s Alter-Armour was equipped with a giant coil rifle, Embden–Meyerhof–Parnas (EMP) pathway generator, Power Fist and a giant sword.

I could tell by its undecorated and plain black paintjob, that this was a young Alter-Armour. Since it belonged to an Ensign, it was obviously a Minion-class; the lowest level machine.

Just for reference, Alter-Armours are ranked as such: Kishin > Dominion > Master > Senior > Major > Juvenile > Minor > Minion.

“It’s a Minion type, but it’s equipped similarly to Dawnbringer.”

Chief Luise commented on Meihowa’s Alter-Armour.

“This Alter-Armour... is spawned off from Dawnbringer, isn’t it?”



In other words, this Alter-Armour was like a child of Dawnbringer, since it was created by using Dawnbringer's cells. Although it was incomparable to the real Dawnbringer, I felt pleased seeing a spawnling of Dawnbringer.

"Then do you want to try the suit on?"

Sergeant Aroha brought the suits while smirking. However, I shook my head.

"Miss... Luise and I cannot ride the Alter-Armour while wearing the suits."

"What are you saying?"

Kishin-Class pilots possessed strength on a completely different level from other pilots. So, if we were to pilot a non-Kishin Class Alter-Armour, we might overclock the machine and break it.

Especially for a Minion; the lowest class. It wouldn't be able to handle our power levels.

The aptitude test machine shouldn't go haywire, but we still had to be careful.

"We'll just try the test. We just need to hold on to this, right?"

I placed my hand on the tester in front of the Alter-Armour. Then the graph displayed on the maintenance machine rose at an incredible speed and the machine restarted.

"Huh? That's strange. Why did the machine restart?"

Meihowa wondered out loud at the unusual occurrence.

When the machine rebooted, Chief Luise grabbed it—only for the graph to shoot up and crash.

"So it's an error. That's strange, I've never seen something like this before."

"Is it saying that their Greenie Level (is there such thing?!) is too high for them to pilot an Alter-Armour? Try it again after wearing the suit."

Ensign Meihowa and Sergeant Aroha thought the maintenance machine was broken and demanded us to wear the suit and try it out for real.

However, Chief Luise and I refused. The moment we step into the newly created Alter-Armour with the suit, it would either die or go haywire.

The actual reason as to why the maintenance restarted was because the safety device sensed our power and restarted to stop something like that happening.

One could consider the Alter-Armour as the body, and its pilot as the brain. If the pilot was exerting too much energy into the body, then the body would naturally shut down.

This was why the maintenance equipment automatically shut itself down when it sensed levels it wouldn't be able to handle.

However, if we were to reveal that fact, then that would be the same as revealing our identities to the Federation as the real Lezirth Dawnbringer and Luise Maynard.

That would be problematic.

With us declared deceased by the Government, there is the possibility of us being purged yet again if we were to reveal our identities. We had to somehow let this pass without causing a scene.

"There's no need to go that far. And don't worry about the back-up pilot, Ensign Meihowa. There wouldn't be a need to choose a pilot as long as you don't die, right?"

"Are you going against your leader's orders? Well, I wonder what the problem was. People with high intellect or academics tend to score high results."

Platoon Leader Meihowa played with her hair with her finger as she looked at the machine in wonder.

Geez, can't you tell that we scored high? We scored so high, and that's why the machine rebooted itself.



The medium-sized Assault Cruiser was not equipped with a hyperspace travel engine. That was the case 120 years ago, and that didn't seem to have changed.

However, giga-sized destroyers seemed to have been equipped with hyperspace travel engines starting from the year 184.

The world really has become a better place.

Anyhow, getting to the Azoran star system via medium sized Assault Cruiser was impossible, so we were hitching a ride on the titanic Archimedes, which was headed to that system, and travel to Azoran-4, then to Azoran-3.

To sum it up, we were getting a lift to the battlefield by a carrier.

While we were on the titanic-sized, carrier-type space ship, we weren't allowed to leave our Assault Cruiser while docked onto the Archimedes. Despite being a part of the Federation forces, we were not permitted to set foot inside the Archimedes ship.

So we were wasting our time in the tight Assault Cruiser.

I was obviously bored. We had to stick with our roommates in the Assault Cruiser, but Pencolt abandoned me, giggling, to play around with his other friends.

"Uh fu fu fu. I shall now go watch a war film with my friends."

With those words, Pencolt left me and waited for his other friends on the docking deck, as if he wanted me to see.

Strangely enough, I envied him. Even someone like Pencolt actually had Replicant friends who shared the same hobbies he did.

Damn it, does that mean I'm less popular and have less of a future than him? No way! How could this happen?

After a while, a few Replicant soldiers came. Since they were all dressed in military uniform, they all looked the same and didn't seem to be any different. However, they all let off an atmosphere similar to Pencolt's, which couldn't be masked by their uniforms.

"Yoo!"

Pencolt raised his hand and greeted them. However, they didn't recognise who Pencolt was and walked past him.

For a moment, I shouted 'I knew it!' gleefully in my heart, but that made me feel even more sad about myself.

"Hey, it's me! Pencolt Lim!" (Lim seems to be his family name)

Pencolt quickly extended his arm out to the group who just passed him and grabbed their shoulders. The soldiers turned around in surprise.

"Huh? T-That voice."

"Could it be Pencolt?"

They recognised Pencolt and had their socks blown off.

"N-No way!"

"We also went through the same training, you know? What happened to you?! Did you catch a fat burning illness or something?"

"Y-You lost so much weight!"

"Y-Y-You look completely different!"

The soldiers overreacted at the sight of Pencolt. Considering that Pencolt lost so much weight and looked a lot sharper than before, that reaction wasn't very surprising. They must've thought that the instructors starved Pencolt, if he was that thin.

Just now, they didn't recognise Pencolt because of his appearance, but they're still his friends?

Argghh! To think that I don't have as many friends as him!

"Then please do excuse me, my dear roommate, as I have a special viewing to attend! Protect the base, man! Ha ha ha!"

Pencolt waved his hand at me.

Hmm, I feel irked for some reason. Am I a stingy person if I feel the irresistible urge to punch him? Is that how it is? Is it?

I returned to my quarters and looked at the wall in a daze.

I get treated like a greenie by everyone, I don't know anyone here, and I'm feeling 'resentment' at Pencolt's 'connections'. *Sigh*... this is the end for me.

Then, the door opened.

"M-May I come in, Lezirth?"

The brown haired girl, dressed in the bullet-proof vest and a helmet, stood before my door while twiddling her fingers. In this windowless interior, where all sides were simply welded together, her presence lit up the room.

"Ah, M-Miss... Luise.

"Please don't use the Miss! I've asked you call me by my name."

Chief Luise Maynard. The President of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Excluding the Minister of the Federation, she held the top position, with everyone under her lead 120 years ago! Not only that, she was the pilot of Tetragrammaton, as well as an Admiral, and she was giving me an order. I was obviously going to obey.

"Ah... yes. T-Then, Luise?"

"That's right. You should have done so earlier."

"It is not easy to change the way I have addressed you, for such a long time."

"Then you need some practice. Keep calling me Luise."

Chief Luise sat next to me as she said that. Since she walked in, the automatic door closed itself.

She and I sat facing each other in that tight place. I was supposed to say her name in a place like this?

"Pardon?"

I gulped. I became thirsty. I wonder why, I drank enough water already.

"Hurry."

“Ah... yes.... Luise.”

“Yes. A bit more.”

“Luise?”

“Yes, one more time.”

“Luise...”

Every time I repeated her name, she enjoyed it. The way that she giggled was like a cat having its sides tickled.

After enjoying it like that, she stood up with a stony expression.

“Ah, this wasn’t what I came here to do.... There is something that concerns me.”

“Something that concerns you?”

“I find it strange that Archimedes is traveling to Azoran-4.”

I wasn’t sure where she was going with this, so I goggled my eyes.

“What do you mean?”

“Archimedes... is an anti-Letix spaceship in this era. The Federation currently holds the Letix as the greatest threat, then the Asa, and finally, the Elcros. But it doesn’t make sense to send the weapon used to fight the greatest foes, to attack weak Elcros.”

“Maybe they are aiming for an intensive surprise attack?”

“But according to the information that I gathered, it would be more profitable for the Federation to stretch out the war against the Elcros. Rather than driving the Elcros to extinction or conquest, the Federation would make more money by leaving them just barely standing.”

“Then maybe it’s a routine rotation of battleships?”

“I suppose there is that possibility. Maybe it was unwise of me... to question every action they take.”

She clicked her tongue as she said that.

But she really was amazing. Despite being a recruit, she was able to come to those possible conclusions, with that limited amount of information. Even when our knowledge was almost useless in this world 120 years into the future.

“Ah, and I... started to hack into the Federation’s military computer.”

“What?”

The Federation’s military computer was a giant Quantum computer, that our terminal was able to access by hyperspace communication.

The CPU was a huge Mother-Frame on the Epiece System.

And the terminals, owned by every soldier of the Federation military, accessed the Mother-Frame levels according to their rank and authority, to share information.

The computers of the olden civilization were built using its own CPU, but Quantum computers increase in functionality proportional to their size, so this method of relaying back to the Mother-Frame was much more effective with the correct communication method.

However, that meant that hacking into that military computer could cause horrendous implications. What she just declared was no different than saying, she will take all authority of the Federation with her own hands.

The issue is, for her, such a thing would actually be possible.

This was because she was the one who built the Federation’s military computer, Chief Luise Maynard. The system went through updates and firewall improvements over the past 120 years, of course.

So that was why she declared ‘I’m hacking into the computer’. 120 years ago, she would’ve said, ‘I’ve hacked into the computer’.

“So Lezirth, please don’t hold back and ask me any questions that may trouble you. And we must be careful. We don’t know what might happen in the Azoran system.”

“I see. And I will be fine. I will protect you, Admiral Luise.”

“You called me Admiral again, didn’t you.”

“Ah... L-Luise? Then please be informal with me as well, Luise. If you... Luise is formal with me, then it would be harder for me to....”

When I addressed her without any formalities, she smiled brightly.

“Yes, Lezirth. I’ll also protect you. With all of my strength.”

She took off her helmet and placed her forehead on top of mine. I was taken back and froze in surprise. I could feel her warmth through my forehead.

“Then please do your best, Lezirth.”

“Yes, Luise.”

Luise smiled gently, put on her helmet again, and left the shell.

When she left, I could finally calm down. The ‘resentment’ that has been boiling away inside me disappeared, and I felt like talking with her healed my heart.

When I should’ve been the one who heals her instead!

“Arghh!”

I suddenly felt a head splitting pain. It was an excruciating pain. It felt like my eyes were being gouged out from the inside of my skull. I could only close my eyes firmly, endure the eye-popping pressure, and wait for it to pass.

◊ ◊ ◊

It is an old memory of my childhood days.

Despite being born from the Letix Uberlord, I still had a childhood. Born in a laboratory and raised by the researchers there, I was simply named ‘Replicant Sample B’.

They were striving for and researching the completeness not found in the other weak clones, yet they told me that I wasn't born by the wills of the researchers, but by the Letix Uberlord. They were not as cruel to me, compared to the others. That was because there was a 'Replicant Sample C'.

She was chosen as a control sample, like me.

C was far more obedient than I ever was, making it easier for them to gather data. But her powers were growing to dangerous levels. With a glass wall between us, I used to look at her all the time.

"I will save you."

I promised so, in my boyish days. The girl only nodded her head. Her long hair swayed in the glass cylinder, filled to the brim with water, which resembled a lake.

I was only lying to the girl.

Because she freed herself from that place, while I was just barely developing my strength.

I... dreamt of the past of my childhood.

◊ ◊ ◊

It was a little over 7 hours since our departure from the Epiece system, when the Archimedes arrived in the Azoran system.

Azoran-4 often displayed sparks of light, which could be seen from distant space. So it was quite clear that the Federation hasn't quite taken the planet under its rule. However, with the arrival of Archimedes, and the overwhelming tide of the war, this planet would soon be under the Federation's control.

Although I knew little about the Elcro race, thinking about Ensign Meihowa (she is now officially a commissioned officer, after being put on the front lines) pained my heart. If only I wasn't purged, I could've prevented the war with the Elcros.

As I was deep in my thoughts, a siren started to wail inside the ship. Our medium-sized Assault Cruiser was released from Archimedes, and started to set course for Azoran-3.

◊ ◊ ◊

“As you all know, our training will be held in a similar manner to the real battles. After landing on Azoran-3, Southern Sphere 35-120, we will install a beacon at a designated location after a tactical aim is set. Azoran-3 is habitable for humans, but our landing area is volcanic, so there is a possibility of toxic gas being present. Link up the oxygen tank to your helmets, and squad leaders, put on your Power-Armour according to your squad number. The details of the training are available on your terminals, so refer to that. We will now be organising the squads.”

They were inside the storage area where the Spider and Alter-Armour were kept—which happened to be the largest area available on the Assault Cruiser. The Suicidal Platoon was listening to Ensign Meihowa’s mission briefing there.

As directed by Ensign Meihowa, the recruit squad leaders stepped out, and started to equip themselves with the Power-Armour. These Power-Armours were mechanical armour that measured 250cm in height when equipped. When a nuclear battery is attached, it fuels the motor within—bringing out tremendous strength, and it is pre-equipped with Movement Sensitive Body Bunker ,as well as Power Fist.

They acted as the crowd-control to protect their squad.

But before that, there were squad leaders amongst the recruits? How come I didn’t know?

“Ehmm... Lezirth. Sorry, but we’d like you to leave our squad.”

“We don’t want you in our squad either.”

“It would be really problematic if you join us.”

The three squad leaders who stepped out in front of us, refused to take me into their squads. I wasn’t the only one who was rejected, because Chief Luise, who joined later because of gravity adaptation therapy, and Pencolt were both rejected.

"H-Hold on a minute! Now this isn't fair, isn't it? We are all comrades in this platoon! Does it even make sense to split up the squads depending on personal preference? We're not trying to split ourselves up into the red and blue teams, right!"

I voiced my arguments out loud, but I only realised how sad that was as I listened to myself.

To think that I would be treated as an unstable bomb, that could go off at any time, when I used to be hailed as the Hero of the Federation, the saviour of thousands of people, just weeks ago! I became sorrowful about myself for even complaining like this.

It was then when Sergeant Aroha patted my back.

"There, there, did our little Lezirth get bullied?"

"....."

"You, Luise and Pencolt will be acting as the guards for the Spider. So you'll be working with me. Got it?"

"*Cough* O-OK."

I could feel the warm generosity of the Platoon Leader and the Platoon Sergeant. And because of that, I couldn't help but feel even more sorry about myself.

To think... that I would be a soldier that needs special attention!

I'm doomed. I'm so ashamed. This pitch black stain on the legend of Vice Admiral Lezirth Dawnbringer's life! I was lost for words because of the shame.

05. Omen

Azoran-3 was a planet that possessed a continent near its equator.

A popular opinion among people is that planets with a continent on the equator disrupt the sea and air flow of the planet—limiting its ability to produce plentiful agriculture, when compared to Earth.

Contrary to this belief, however, the plants on Azoran-3 had the property of being able to absorb the sea water with high mineral levels and filter it into fresh water, while utilising the minerals and the water for its growth.

As a result, there were so many flora growing near the equator that one could express it as a giant green solar panel.

One could say that the energy efficiency was quite high. But on the other hand, this planet was similar to Earth during its carboniferous period, so there was a high risk of fire.

“There is a high risk of a wildfire due to the high oxygen levels, and there are giant-sized insects, so always be on your guard. This place is infested with dinosaur-sized monsters. Azoran-3 is a planet in its natural state, so keep that in mind!”

During the training, Ensign Meihowa’s voice could be heard over the terminals. Admiral Louise and I boarded the training capsule.

“Go!”

The training capsule flew towards Azoran-3.

After a sudden gravitational acceleration, zero-gravity could be experienced inside the capsule. I looked around to Admiral Louise in concern, but she was indifferent to the gravitational change—most likely a result of her gravity adaption course she completed.

“W-We ended up travelling together, didn’t we Lezirth.”

Admiral Louise’s face was hidden behind the ‘Full Face’ feature on the helmet. However, it was easy to recognise it was her under the military uniform because of her small, cute and petite figure as well as her feminine and scared, pitiful features.

"Yes, of course. But I apologise for showing you my shortcomings back there. I never expected that I would be ostracised by everyone in the platoon...."

"There you go again. But I'm glad that happened. B-Because we can stick together now...."

Hmm? She's happy? Because she can stick with me? I-I see.

"Ah! I-It would be a problem if you say it like that. Please don't say that to anyone besides me. The other hotheaded males would misunderstand you. Ha ha ha."

Admiral Louise still trusted me wholeheartedly. That's right, even if I'm ostracised by the platoon, the fact that I am the war hero Lezirth Dawnbringer does not change.

I was fit enough to work alongside Admiral Louise, who knew of that better than anyone else! Hmm, to think she trusted me this much....

I have to repay that debt. I feel like my debt has doubled.

"..."

Although I couldn't see Admiral Louise's expression behind the helmet, she appeared to be in a bad mood all of a sudden.

At that moment, the capsule started to decelerate. The parachute on the training capsule must've activated itself as we approached the surface.

After a short while, the training capsule landed with a thunderous noise.

I studied the surroundings of the training capsule, after turning on the terminal. I could see some human-sized bugs that resembled a wrasse in the thick swamp forest.

Hmm, there's quite a few of them. I wonder if they're dangerous.

"Then I will go out first."

I jumped out of the training capsule and grabbed my M-10 Bayonet. It was a multi-purpose military weapon that could double as a gun or a short sword because of the attached blade on top of the gun.

One could attach a Thorium nuclear battery and shoot holes in armoured vehicles with High Frequency Vibrations, but people rarely do so due to the high risk of failure. The Bayonet aside, I also had Colion Coil Rifles with me but there was no need to waste any ammunition on these bugs.

The wrasse-like bugs must've been dangerous, because they all turned around and leapt at me like I was their prey.

I quickly dished out double roundhouse kicks and warded them off. It would be impossible to keep fighting off these bugs using such a method, but that only applied to normal people! I'll let them taste the Psyonic powers of the Dawnbringer!

—Bzzzz!

Cherenkov radiation flew out twice with each kick. When the leaping bugs were hit with the radiation, they flew backwards and splattered against the trees or simply fell onto the floor and split in half.

I spun in circles as I continued to kick and used the momentum to switch to using my fists.

“Lightning Fire Piercing Fist!”

A beam of radiation shot out from my fist and pierced through the swarm of bugs in a line. A strong gale followed its path and emitted shockwaves.

While the bugs were recovering from the shock, I swung the Bayonet around. The bugs dropped dead as they were cut into pieces.

When I deemed the surroundings as safe, I used the terminal to contact Admiral Louise who was still inside the capsule.

[Landing zone is clear. All threats have been eliminated. You can come out now, Louise.]

“Yes, I understand.”

Admiral Louise walked out from the capsule. She was very taken aback at the numerous bug corpses that littered the ground.

“Isn’t this area very dangerous for training if there are wild organisms such as these inhabiting the lands?”

“These are nothing.... There are the Colion Coil Rifles as well.”

Colion Coil Rifles was so useful as a weapon, that the same type of weapon was used for armoured vehicles and Alter-Armours.

A primitive life form wouldn’t stand a chance against the soldiers armed with these rifles.

“Now then, let us join the Platoon Leader and the Vice Platoon Leader where the Spider landed. We should move while protecting each other as a pair.”

That was when it happened.

Suddenly, a scream sounded over the terminal and sounds of gunfire could be heard.

[Whoaa! What kind of a monster is that!?]

[Kyaaa!!]

[No!]

Hearing the scream from the Alpha squad, I quickly used the computer to get a visual on Alpha. The visual being streamed from the camera on the helmets of the Alpha squad was luckily not an attack from a dangerous monster or an enemy.

They were shooting off their Coil Rifles wildly at centipedes that appeared to be over 10 meters in length. The native insects of Azoran-3 were being decimated before the force of the rifles. The centipedes caught fire naturally because of the high oxygen levels and burned away at a frightening rate.

“I thought they bumped into a Letix Predator or something since they were yelling so loudly.”

I lost interest and turned off the visual. However, I couldn’t deny that these insects were threatening. A small mistake could cost us our lives, so I had to move carefully.

“Please follow me carefully, since we’re in the jungle.”

I hacked away at any obstacles or thorny plants and created a path through the trees. After a while, we arrived at the site where the Alter-Armour and Spider had landed.

“Lezirth! Louise! Do something about this guy.”

Pencolt was tightly clinging onto Power-Armour-clad Sergeant Aroha’s ankles. If she wasn’t wearing the Power-Armour, it would’ve been considered as sexual harassment but at the moment, the Power-Armour leg was no different to a metal pole.

“Whoaa... I’m so scared. The big monsters were....”

“What’s so scary about them? Damn it you! Aren’t you supposed to be a man?!”

“Ah, that just now was sexual discrimination. How can you discriminate between men and women in this day and age, man? Sergeant, I’m gonna sue you for sexual discrimination. Look forward to it!”

“...”

As Sergeant Aroha pulled a speechless expression in exasperation, Ensign Meihowa jumped down from the Alter-Armour’s cockpit.

“Hmm, it seems like Alpha Squad is battling with a swarm of insects at the moment. There seems to be some injured, but no deaths. What about you two, Greenie and Louise? You were way off course with your landing.”

“We’re fine, Ensign. But they suffered injuries just because of some insects? Geez.”

I wasn’t angry at the fact that Alpha Squad excluded me from their squad. I was just angry that they were lacking as soldiers of the Federation.

I wasn’t secretly laughing inside my heart at what Alpha Squad was going through.

‘Ha ha, those fools. This is great.’

Ah, I’ve done it now. OK, I didn’t think those thoughts till just now.

"Now then, everyone on the Spider, please. We'll assault the striking point and go set up the beacon."

After saying that, Ensign Meihowa listened carefully to the communication channel on the computer. Then suddenly, a bzzt sounded through the entire channel.

"... Eh?"

"What was that?"

The communication channel used by the Space Federation had hyperspace technology integrated into the system. Although it was difficult to jump military equipment and personnel through hyperspace, jumping data was fairly easy, so EMP or solar waves had no effect on the communications.

I only knew of one that was able to disrupt the channel and cause a noise like this.

"Tetragrammaton's Ultimate Kishin Technique: 'Punishing Wail'!"

It is a powerful attack that is able to decimate enemies over tens of light years with an explosion. It was even able to interfere with hyperspace travel for a few hours as a side effect.

But if that activated just now...

At that moment, something sounded over the white noise. It sounded like cries from the prisoners of hell itself.

[Archimedes is damaged! Ship damage is calculated to be at 37.52%!]

[H-How can this be?! According to the military computer analysis, that was an attack from the Tetragrammaton, sir!]

[Enemy ship emerging, sighted on Azoran-4!]

[Enemy sighted! It's... a Diablo! Kishin Diablo and numerous Alter-Armours!]

[Arghhh!]

With a yell... an aurora suddenly appeared on Azoran-3's atmospheric layer.

Meteor showers began to fall onto Azoran-3. The Federation's warship that brought them to the Azoran system was broken, and the debris burst into flames as they fell through the atmosphere like a meteor shower.

The aurora that occurred a while ago continued to shine bluish light as energy collided onto the ionosphere. Although it was a beautiful sight, that was the sight of the meaningless deaths of over 50,000 Federation soldiers.

"Archimedes has been destroyed. Every ship near Azoran-4 has been destroyed."

After dealing damage to the Archimedes, which was leading the Azoran-4 attack forces, with Tetragrammaton's long distance attack 'Punishing Wail', a force of Alter-Armours led by the Diablo finished the job.

Although the war records displayed the Elcros or Asas' military strength as below humans', they started a strong comeback with that powerful attack.

Admiral Louise analysed the situation even with the lack of information.

"Asas and Elcros formed an alliance. The Rebel Replicant Force might be part of it as well. No, they must be in an alliance."

And an Asa, Elcro or Rebel Replicant possessed the Tetragrammaton—with a Kishin-class pilot at that.

One couldn't use the Kishin to its full ability just by possessing it. Alter-Armour was the physical body while the pilot was the brain. A brainless warrior is useless even with a strong body, and Alter-Armour worked in the same way—a fitting pilot must operate the Alter-Armour in order to bring out its full potential.

And not every Kishin-class pilot could pilot something like Tetragrammaton fully. Only someone who possessed a clairvoyance ability, like Admiral Louise Maynard, was able to accurately hit an enemy 50 light years away.

A saviour to comrades and the grim reaper to the enemy.

Tetragrammaton was now in the enemy's possession!

However, the others have not yet noticed that the Tetragrammaton was now in the enemy's possession.

That was to be expected, because they heard about Tetragrammaton being lost 120 years ago; they never would've been able to witness its power in their life.

Even so, it was enough to ring some alarms, seeing the spaceships wiped out.

[W-What will happen to us?]

[W-We can survive, right? We're only recruits! W-We're no different to civilians!]

[Damn it, you're shitting me. This is a joke, isn't it? Someone tell me this is just a candid camera! Why is this happening as soon as we landed on Azoran?!]

[I'm not even supposed to be in the Navy! Why did they forcefully conscript me into this!]

Complaints came through from Alpha, Bravo and Charlie squads. Ensign Meihowa shouted her orders to them in response.

[Stop your whining! The training is cancelled! Everyone gather at the beacon point! Gather your equipment and the injured and move to the beacon point! Arrive there in 2 hours, Federation Standard Time!]

"No, Ensign Meihowa. We can't do that!"

I stopped Meihowa by going up to her.

The medium-sized Assault Cruiser was circulating around Azoran-3 at the moment. However, if we were to go to the beacon point, in other words, if we send a contact signal to the Assault Cruiser, the enemies would be aware of our existence on Azoran-3. If the enemy force is indeed an Elcro-Asa alliance, then they will not only attempt to chase any intruders away from Azoran-4, but also reclaim Azoran-3.

"What are you doing, Greenie! Are you going against my orders? We are in a battle! You might think we were playing around till now, but serious consequences will fall upon you if you rebel!"

Ensign Meihowa looked at me with an intimidating glare. I suppose she really will consider me as a rebel if I go against her orders.

“Ensign Meihowa, with all due respect, I have a strategy suggestion.”

“A suggestion? Say it.”

“It is suicidal to return to the Assault Cruiser at a time like this.”

“Hmm, you’re not showing any respect. Well, whatever. Your point?”

“We have to survive on the ground while waiting for the main forces. The enemy has the Diablo and Tetragrammaton; a force with at least two Kishins. They will try to reclaim Azoran-3.”

“I agree with him, Ensign. I believe we mustn’t return to the Assault Cruiser, but to drop it onto Azoran-3 and try to hold our place by recovering the crew members and goods from it. With the Azoran system under the enemy’s control at the moment, we will be reduced to space dust if we attempt to escape by a single Assault Cruiser.”

Admiral Louise also voiced her support.

Ensign Meihowa sighed. She must be very confused at the situation, since she was promoted to an official Ensign only recently.

However, instead of forcefully arguing for her views, she accepted Louise’s and my opinions.

“Even if that is true, we don’t know when support will arrive.”

“That may be so, but doing this is for the better. If we try to escape on the Assault Cruiser, we’ll be reduced to dust.”

“I suppose... it would be for the better if we hold our places and surrender later on. Since the Sergeant and I are half-Asa and half-Elcro.”

“Now then Recruit Pencolt. No, I suppose it would be Apprentice Pencolt now that we are in a real war situation.”

"I-I want to be a civilian, man. I don't wanna be captured by the enemy for being a soldier, so I'll just become a miner on Azoran-3."

Pencolt was trembling greatly. It wasn't fitting for a soldier, but I could understand.

"Ah, now that I think about it, there're only civilians on Azoran-3, aren't there."

Ensign Meihowa wore a bitter smile. When the Federation captured Azoran-3, they sent miners immediately and have been mining minerals.

"Don't you think we should warn the miners at the mines about the situation? There should be security guards there to protect the miners."

Sergeant Aroha asked, but Admiral Louise refused immediately.

"They will have a higher level of command than us... if we contact them recklessly, we might have to obey their orders. Our platoon is nothing but a suicidal squad, is it not? They will use that fact to their advantage and if we refuse, we will be held responsible at the international courts."

"But if we go too out of hand, we will still be held responsible at the international courts. We'll follow your decision, Ensign."

I looked at Ensign Meihowa.

She inspected the hologram visual on the computer with a complicated expression. She appeared to be accepting the fact that I didn't suggest my opinions to save my life, but to act with consequence.

"No change of plan for now! We will move to the beacon point as planned!"

"Ensign Meihowa!"

And I just explained to her how suicidal that would be! Can't she trust me at least that much!? I tried to continue talking.

"However, we won't board the Assault Cruiser there, but we'll retrieve the goods and move on. We won't turn into space dust like that, right?"

That certainly was easier than finding somewhere to gather around with the other squads. The risk of being discovered by the enemy forces was greater, but... they

shouldn't pay a great deal of attention to a medium-sized Assault Cruiser. They can catch up to us in no time anyway.

"Ah! O-OK. That's not bad."

... Is what I thought.



Well, nothing terrible happened.

The suicidal platoon gathered at the meeting point and gathered food, ammunition, vehicles and Power-Armours from the Assault Cruiser.

There was enough food, ammunition and equipment to last us for at least two months and our numbers grew when the crew members joined us. That was good.

And afterwards, the Assault Cruiser was blown to smithereens as I had predicted. That was also good. Having the Assault Cruiser destroyed might help us to hide our movements from now on.

However, the only issue was that Lieutenant Imamura was on board the Assault Cruiser.

Assault Cruisers could be operated unmanned, with the exception of occasional mechanics checking up on the system, and they were able to set courses by themselves. Hence, they were designed to be used similarly to a private plane.

But when and why did this lieutenant sneak on board without us noticing?

"Eh, I was on board in case of an emergency as your instructor. There is no way I would send recruits and an Ensign-in-training to a dangerous place like this, right? So all of you are now under my command."

Lieutenant Imamura scanned across everyone gathered at the beacon point but he stopped when he looked at me.

"..."

What did he want? I have a gun in my hands, so you wanna have a go? You might want to think twice before acting out just because I'm your 'subordinate' for the moment.

And I was originally a Vice Admiral. A Lieutenant like him should be falling to his knees and bowing down to me, if he even dared to look me in the eyes. Or maybe I should state my officer school graduation year? I was in the military during the AD period!

As I glared back at him with those thoughts on my mind, the Lieutenant quickly looked away. Tsk. I expected a similar reaction, but to see him really avoiding my gaze, the Federation Force is really lacking in the quality department.

"Eh-hem. I am now your platoon leader. Ensign Meihowa! Give your Alter-Armour to me and you use the Power-Armour. And I will leave you to monitor for any enemies."

In a space war, Alter-Armour acted almost as a foot soldier, so it was one of the positions with the highest casualty rates. However, Alter-Armour was one of the jobs that had the lowest casualty occurrences on land.

Hence, Lieutenant Imamura decided to use the safest equipment for himself and demoted Ensign Meihowa to the Power-Armour.

This bastard, how dare he take the safety for himself, and leave Ensign Meihowa vulnerable? What a cheap person. Why couldn't he be blasted into space dust, along with the Assault Cruiser just before!

However, Ensign Meihowa handed over her Alter-Armour to him without a complaint.

"Well, now then!"

Imamura took off his bullet-proof vest and climbed into the cockpit in the Alter-Armour suit attire.

In Ensign Meihowa's case, her tight Alter-Armour pilot suit was a joy to look at, but the sight of Imamura in the Alter-Armour suit was revolting. His backside was swaying side to side as he climbed up; why can't he fall off and just die? My cursing had no effect because he managed to climb into the cockpit safely.

—Whirl!

The Alter-Armour did boot up, but the compatibility was so low that the minion class Alter-Armour was in a ‘drowsy’ state. The wavelengths simply did not match up and it was almost as if it was sleepy.

Seeing the Alter-Armour struggling to walk and stumbling like a drunkard made me mad.

[Now then, everyone move toward the 1st Mine. We will join the higher ranks there and follow their command! Ensign Meihowa, study our path for any enemies by launching the unmanned surveillance vehicle.]

When the Lieutenant gave out his orders through the terminals, Admiral Louise argued.

[Please hold on a moment. There might be enemies still in the atmosphere after the attack on the Assault Cruiser. Launching the unmanned surveillance vehicle now might reveal our existence to the enemy. Wouldn’t it be safer to navigate through the jungle since we have the maps installed on the computer?]

It was certainly true. Launching the USV over the jungles when the Assault Cruiser was destroyed not too long ago, was almost the equivalent to advertising ‘we are here’ to the enemy forces.

Furthermore, how much could you figure out from an unmanned surveillance vehicle in a jungle like this anyway? The odds of being discovered by the enemy outweighed the benefits.

The Lieutenant scoffed at the reasonable suggestion.

[Who are you to tell me what to do?! We are the ones who first started to use surveillance vehicles in the first place; I know what I’m doing! Hurry up and deploy it!]

[I refuse. It is far too dangerous to deploy the surveillance vehicle for at least another 2 hours.]

Ensign Meihowa shook her head and Lieutenant Imamura grinded his teeth.

[This bitch... where did your coxing attitude go to!? Why are you acting like this now!?]

Whoa, he's got in way over his head. And to think he would actually say it on a monitored and recorded channel!

[I have never done that.]

[Well, whatever. I will be seeing you in court for disobeying my orders. Just follow me for now. Chief Technician Yeon-Sik Oh, you deal with the surveillance vehicle!]

Chief Technician Yeon-Sik Oh was the Chief Technician of the Assault Cruiser mechanics.

[But Lieutenant, what the Ensign and Recruit said is true. It is far too dangerous to deploy it right now. Please make a reasonable decision.]

[Are you ignoring my authority as well? I'm a Lieutenant!]

"And I'm a Vice Admiral."

[What? Who said that?]

"..."

When I stayed silent, Chief Technician Yeon-Sik Oh sighed and started to manipulate the unmanned surveillance vehicle.

The surveillance vehicle flew up through the jungle layers and started to feed the visuals to the computer. All we could see were trees, obviously, but there were the occasional birds and insects moving in the layers. It was like watching a peaceful nature documentary.

Sure, the sight might give some sense of relief to us, but we were risking everyone's lives just to see these visuals.

It really was tough to be under an incompetent officer.



Admiral Louise, Pencolt and I clung onto the Spider and raced through the jungle. The other soldiers boarded onto military vehicles and shouldn't have any problems following us.

Sergeant Aroha had the terminals turned off and was swearing her head off as she drove the Spider. Giga-sized reptiles and insects that inhabited this jungle occasionally attacked us, but Pencolt and Admiral Louise drove them away with their rifles.

We should be able to reach the 1st Mine in approximately 20 minutes.

[Hmph! And to think all of you complained to me. See, nothing's gone wrong.]

Why is that fool planting his own death flag again? I clicked my tongue in annoyance at Lieutenant Imamura's chatters.

That was when it happened.

Suddenly, something flashed up in the sky and our surveillance vehicle caught on fire. With that, 2 unmanned surveillance vehicles similar to ours revealed themselves in the air.

“What?”

“Damn! They’re Rebel Replicant Force equipment!”

“What are you all doing! Shoot! Shoot it down!”

But before that, the enemy’s surveillance vehicles started to move.

There were two Colion Coil Rifles on each of the vehicles, similar to the infantry’s. Though they were different from the usual Coil Rifles, because they shot high-mass plasma jets and smart bombs instead of firing 0.1g of plasma at Mach 10 speeds.

The USVs flew over the jungle, scanning over us; sensing with ultrasonic waves, heat and metal detection.

In a matter of seconds, all of our equipment and forces were revealed to the enemy. High-mass plasma jets flew towards us in a ray from the surveillance vehicles.

Everything in its path caught on fire as it rushed through the jungle and the ray shone over the Alter-Armour that Lieutenant Imamura was piloting, the allied vehicles and the Spider.

“Tsk!”

I switched my hands and formed a space-wrap around me to redirect the falling plasma back at the enemies. However, it was impossible to redirect all of the plasma jets that were firing down like a flamethrower.

Every plasma particle in my reach was redirected back at the enemy, but the rest of the plasma jets hit their target and displayed showy explosions and immense heat.

The shocked soldiers started to shoot up at the air. However, it was quite difficult to shoot down USVs when they’re moving so rapidly.

[Arghh!]

[No!]

[Urghh!]

One of the vehicles was shot by a plasma jet and smart bomb at the same time. The vehicle belonged to the Alpha squad, and they were blown away in an instant.

Smart bombs were small, but their firepower was nothing to scoff at, and there was no need to mention the power of plasma jets.

The sight of the inside of the vehicle was shocking. The Power-Armour clad squad leader’s arms and legs were lopped off because of the plasma jet, and his body had been blown away in all directions because of the smart bomb that fell afterwards.

Other squad members didn’t suffer from the shrapnel because they were wearing bullet-proof vest, but the issue was the combustion that occurred from the plasma jet impact. Metal pieces that were hit by the plasma started to burst into flames because of the high density of oxygen on Azoran-3.

Light and heat that was almost on par with burning magnesium started to occur, and the whole car started to burn.

"Everyone jump out of the car! It's dangerous!"

After dealing a significant amount of damage to the suicidal bomb squad, the enemy surveillance vehicles turned around in mid-air and started to fly towards us again.

Are they going to shoot out plasma jets and smart bombs again?

However, two rays of light pierced through the surveillance vehicle with great accuracy. It was Admiral Louise who shot down those two vehicles with her rifle while seated on top of the rocky Spider.

She's the one who's able to shoot down enemy fleets from 50 light years away. Although her physical strength was far too lacking to be a sniper, she was more than capable of being an accurate shooter.

The two vehicles that tasted her accurate shots caught on fire and fell to the jungle floor; exploding on impact.

[Everyone, report your casualties!]

Ensign Meihowa quickly ordered her orders via the terminals. When she did, the weak voice of someone from the Alpha squad gave their report.

[A-Alpha squad. 3 dead, 1 vehicle lost, ma'am!]

The halved vehicle was still burning and members pulled out from the vehicle were all in a state of panic.

They just suffered a great deal of damage from a surprise attack after all.

[Spider here. The frontal armour is lost, but it's still functional.]

That was Sergeant Aroha's report.

The Spider was also hit by the plasma jets on its armoured parts, just on top of its frontal lets, but Pencolt switched his Coil Rifle's function to a fire extinguisher and quickly extinguished the flames in time to lessen the damage.

"Fu fu fu. I've memorized the differences in each model of Colion Coil Rifles, man. I knew this had a fire extinguisher function already."

"Yeah, good for you."

If it wasn't for Pencolt's quick actions, the Spider would've gone up in flames as well.

[Ah... Young Min Kim! No!]

[Correction, death toll is now 5. There are 4 wounded.]

The death toll rose with the deaths of some wounded.

Ensign Meihowa gritted her teeth loud enough for the terminal to hear.

[Alpha Squad, join forces with Charlie Squad. And Lieutenant!]

Ensign Meihowa called out to Lieutenant Imamura. However, Lieutenant Imamura was too busy swearing his head off to Chief Technician Oh.

[You fool! What the hell did you learn in the military!? How can you lose our surveillance vehicles to the enemy's when you're controlling it?! Don't they share the same function and technology?]

[Ah... you see, it was a sudden attack, as they came down from the atmosphere, so I was unable to do anything. And there were two of them at that.]

It was obvious that the surveillance vehicle was going to stand out; flying over the green jungle carpet.

The only purpose that our surveillance vehicle had was to publicly announce that it was ready to be shot down, or to signal our position to an ally.

Hence, the one at fault was not Chief Technician Yeon-Sik Oh, but Lieutenant Imamura.

However, the Lieutenant refused to take the blame for his actions.

[What do you mean, you weren't able to do anything! Do you really think that's going to cut it?! Ah, fine! I hold the power since I'm the one in charge right now, right? I sentence you to death!]

[Lieutenant!]

When Ensign Meihowa called him, Lieutenant Imamura turned around the Alter-Armour and aimed the large Coil Rifle at Ensign Meihowa and the Spider.

[What now, Ensign! Are you trying to show off to me? That my orders were wrong?]

[Calm down, Lieutenant. Our position has been revealed to the enemy.]

Ensign Meihowa remained calm even in a situation like this.

I slowly gathered my strength, just in case this would turn out to be a worst case scenario. If the Lieutenant pulls the trigger, I would have to protect her.

I must've not been the only one who thought so, because I could hear Sergeant Aroha aiming the Spider's cannon at the Alter-Armour.

A standoff!

Everyone froze still at the sight.

....

I wonder how long we stayed like that for.

It was hot.

The military uniform was equipped with heat dispersion technology, but the Azoran-3 jungle was hot and humid. The temperature soared while being stuck in the standoff.

“Hmp!”

Lieutenant scoffed and eased the large Coil Rifle.

[So what if we're discovered? We will head to the mining camps and join forces with them. Commander Donna of the 1st Mine is an officer I've served before. The mining camp has strong defences and they will think twice before using nuclear or strong firepower if they plan on reclaiming this planet in good shape. There are Elcro slaves there as well!]

At that moment, an order came from said Commander Donna. The order came through the military channel and a dual-transmission one, so it was an ordinary order.

[The approaching platoon, your mission is to move to the Ateu Plains, located towards the north of the 1st Mine, to stop the enemy's landings.]

A middle-aged military woman with a mole on the tip of her nose gave out her orders in a dull voice.

A visual of the Ateu Plains loaded up on the computer. It was a flat land that was placed between the jungle, and was being used as a temporary landing pad. Hence, it was an area highly sought after by the enemy.

She wanted us to stop the enemy from taking control of that place, with a single platoon? Saying that it was a mission was no different from euphemising a death sentence.

Even Lieutenant Imamura, with his lacking imagination reeled back in shock at the order.

[P-Please hold on a moment! Commander Donna! It's me, Lieutenant Imamura! I believe there has been a mistake with the order! I'm also in this platoon, ma'am! It's supposed to be led by an Elcro half-breed, but I'm also part of this platoon! Commander Donna! Commander! Hey! You pig bitch!]

No matter how much Lieutenant Imamura desperately cried out, Commander Donna cut off the communication and stayed silent after leaving behind her order.

If we refuse, we will be sentenced to death. It was a dilemma where we could neither obey nor disobey the order.

That was the unavoidable mission given to the suicidal bomb platoon by the higher-ups of the 1st Mine base.

06. Descent of Kishins!

The sun was setting on Azoran-3.

Lieutenant Imamura was completely dejected after being abandoned by Commander Donna. He was so dejected that he wasn't even able to pilot the Alter-Armour.

So he was demoted to using a Power-Armour, and Ensign Meihowa reclaimed her right as the Alter-Armour pilot.

And so we started to make camp in the jungle, while dragging the dejected Lieutenant around like baggage.

“Camping preparations are complete.”

Sergeant Aroha was somewhat more cheerful than the rest, and saluted Ensign Meihowa. Meihowa was setting up a bug net to ward off the bugs and responded to the salute.

“It was Louise, wasn’t it? Things really turned out the way you said it would.”

She must’ve remembered what Admiral Louise said about ‘we will become the shields for the higher-ups, if we contact them recklessly’. Admiral Louise wore a bitter smile.

“There must be a lot of soldiers who want to desert right now. Isn’t that right?”

When Admiral Louise asked, Sergeant Aroha nodded.

“That’s right. Chief Technician Yeon-Sik Oh wants to pull out, along with his men.... He says that it’s impossible to protect the Ateu Plains.”

We had to be thankful that the troops were not rebelling against the officers, since Ensign Meihowa and Sergeant Aroha were popular.

However, no one would be able to predict what will happen in the future.

I looked up at the sky while drinking some energy gel. There were no Federation or enemy fleets in sight.

"The Federation must now be careful about sending fleets here, especially after Tetragrammaton's attack. It would be dangerous to send a war fleet only for it to be destroyed by the enemy's attack. Diablo is also here, so sending reinforcements will be very, very risky, and they will be annihilated."

"So, you mean we won't be seeing any reinforcements until either Tetragrammaton or Diablo steps back? But doesn't the Punishing Wail have a cooldown period between attacks?"

Admiral Louise nodded her head.

"It needs a minimum of 36 hours of recharging."

"Wow... you sure know your stuff. You must be an Alter-Armour maniac or something?"

When Sergeant Aroha asked suddenly, Pencolt turned around.

"Did you call me?"

"No, not at all."

"I thought you meant me by maniac, man."

"And if we have to make the Tetragrammaton or Diablo retreat, we have to wait for Kishins to come. The only remaining Kishins on the Federation's side are Ursa Major, Wolfschewein, Ladyhawk, and Swangrace."

Although the Federation only had 4 Kishins in its possession, we had an upper hand over the enemies. Asas and Elcros had 2 Kishins each and counting Diablo, Elcro would have 3 and the Rebels had Omertà, so that's one. So, none of the enemies stood a chance against the Federation.

However, it is a whole new story if the Asas, Elcros and Rebel Replicant Force formed an alliance. The Federation would fall behind on the Kishin head count.

Although the Federation had a great deal of military force, things would change if the enemy uses the Tetragrammaton. If they recklessly attack with numbers alone, they would be wiped out by Tetragrammaton with ease.

Therefore, with Tetragrammaton in the enemy's possession, the Federation couldn't rely on numbers alone, but quality.

"Then what can we do to survive?"

Sergeant Aroha asked the key question.

"It would be suicidal to go to the Ateu Plains for now."

"But if we don't go, we cannot escape from the punishment from the higher-ups; we would be going against their orders."

"Can't we go there slowly?"

When I voiced my opinion, everyone shook their heads.

"No, if we go there slowly and the enemy takes control of the Ateu Plains, we will still be punished. The granny wanted us to protect the plains, and we would either be charged for disobedience or fleeing from battle. In the worst case scenario, we might be executed."

It was as Sergeant Aroha said. Ensign Meihowa's face turned grim.

This truly was a do-or-die, checkmate type situation. However, Admiral Louise had a different idea.

"Let us wait for a little bit longer."

"Huh?"

"The enemy will attack the mining base first, so we will pretend to go to the mining base instead; saying 'the priority of protecting the higher-ups is far greater than the Ateu Plains'. That way, we will escape from the situation unscathed."

"But the enemy must attack the mining base first instead of the Ateu Plains for your plan to work."

"That is not too difficult."

Admiral Louise winked as she said that. Aroha and Meihowa didn't appear to be convinced, but I wholly trusted Admiral Louise's words.

"Then the problem is our complaining soldiers; what should we do with them?"

Ensign Meihowa asked seriously to Admiral Louise. Although Admiral Louise was currently a lower rank than Ensign Meihowa, Meihowa was being highly respectful.

I was happy that Admiral Louise was being respected the way she should be, but why wasn't the Ensign treating me the same way?

"We cannot do anything about the complaining soldiers. We will try to persuade them, but if that fails, we will have to let them go."



After having a simple meal consisting of rations, I sat on top of the Spider. The material used for the Spider's exterior was cool to the touch. I should sleep here during the night to avoid the humidity and sticky air.

I must've not been the only one who had the idea, because someone else was approaching the Spider.

At a closer look, it turned out to be Ensign Meihowa. She leaned against the Spider and lowered herself slowly, sighing in the process.

After pondering whether or not I should strike up a conversation with her, I jumped down from the Spider and landed in front of her.

"Whoa! Ah... it's just you, Greenie."

"Hmm, Ensign. Why are you here by yourself? Were you able to convince the complaining soldiers?"

"It was way too much for me. Bravo Squad plans to follow Chief Technician Oh and desert. Charlie Squad will remain and look after the injured Alpha Squad..."

"And what about Lieutenant Imamura?"

"He plans to leave with Chief Technician Oh."

"That's for the better. But I'm not sure if Chief Technician Oh will let him survive in that group."

This situation was largely Lieutenant Imamura's fault. However, he chose to stay away from the injured Alpha Squad (who were injured because of him) and leave with the others.

However, the issue was that the ones who were staying behind were much nicer than the ones who deserted. So although Lieutenant Imamura was the one who caused this situation, his life would be spared here at least.

But seeing as he left with the Bravo squad... he would be killed in a blink of an eye.

"Well aren't you talking big, Lezirth. Know your place as a Greenie."

"Hmm, no. The true Greenie this time around was Lieutenant Imamura, not me. Don't you agree?"

I did decide to accept being called a Greenie before... but I still didn't like it. I'm Lezirth Dawnbringer— the Commander of the Dawn Corps! I couldn't quite tell them to admire me, but the least they could do is to show some respect.

"But will that be okay, Ensign Meihowa? You and Sergeant Aroha aren't pure Earthlings, are you? Admiral Louise didn't mention it out loud, but you could always surrender to the enemy."

It was silly of me, as an officer of the Federation, to say this, but there was no need for her or Sergeant Aroha to risk their lives for the Federation. Ensign Meihowa showed a sad smile.

"What's gotten into you, Greenie? Saying something great like that."

Her calm and collected act was over. The girl before my eyes was now an emotional and tender girl. This must be what she's usually like.

"You do realize saying that will get you straight to the courts, don't you? You are suggesting me to submit to the enemy. Do you even realize how much of a grave crime that is..."

"The Meihowa I know won't bring me to the courts for something like that."

"What do you even know about me?!"

She was someone who never became angry no matter how much her authority as a platoon leader was challenged. However, she was angry now.

Even so, I kept a serious expression and spoke.

"When people are driven to the brink of their patience and life itself, they reveal their true selves. Most of the time, the ugly or the unsightly, to say the least, surfaces. But Ensign Meihowa, you have kept your calm up until now, even when you are inexperienced. That is very commendable and beautiful. You can take pride in that."

"...."

Ensign Meihowa appeared to be shocked at my words. Some colour returned to her face.

"Y-You don't have to say that. You are a very, very strange person, Lezirth. When I look at you... you really sound old."

Well, it's true that I'm very old. Anyhow, Ensign Meihowa coughed after hearing what I said. She appeared to be less agitated than before, and calmed down.

"B-But doesn't that mean you and Louise, who continued to stay calm, are... um... beautiful as well? Aren't you just praising yourself?"

Her wings fluttered and sprinkled some specks of light. Her tone was sharp and somewhat stressed, but she definitely appeared to be feeling better than before, so that put my heart at ease.

"In that case, it is 'cool' of me to exclude myself from the description."

"Cool, you say? Ha, ha ha ha. Really now... you really are an interesting person. You're so relaxed even in a situation like this. I feel like I can forget about the situation, even for a moment, when I'm talking with you."

Ensign Meihowa smiled for a brief moment, but quickly turned grim as if being reminded of the unfortunate reality.

"I would be seen as a more hateful enemy compared to a human in their eyes... because I am an officer of the Federation. Think about it. Me, this winged girl who is willing to kill her fellow Elcros for her own selfish reasons. Do you think they can forgive someone like that?"

Saying that, she buried her face in her knees. She was hurt by her own words.

"Then why did you join the Armed Forces?"

"Well... because the general idea of an Elcro woman is to be obedient and be treated like dirt. It was suffocating to live among people who had that sort of mentality. My biological father wanted to write me off to some big shot in the Federation as a wife. But I wanted to escape from my father's control and the only way to do so was to join the Armed Forces."

"..."

I heard a lot about officers who offered bribes for their promotion, and I've personally had bribes come in and had been quite taken aback by them before.

But to think there are people who would offer their own daughter as a bribe.... How can a bastard like that be allowed to exist?

"Well, he argued for his actions saying that it was to secure the future in the Federation or some rubbish. So I wanted escape from him, and the fastest way to do so was to join the Armed Forces. I didn't think too deeply about it, to be honest. Then I finally realized something while training in the academy. That I would have to aim my gun at Elcros in the future..."

After saying so, Meihowa became quiet as a mouse.

I could feel something rising up inside me as I looked at her. It was impossible for me to understand the pain this girl went through in her life.

However, my heart was aching with her as I saw her in pain.

She was a victim of the Federation. Because of the war with the Elcro race, slaves were taken and from the slavery and discrimination in the Federation, she found the only way to protect herself—to join the Armed Forces.

I raised my voice just for the change of mood. I was slightly worried that she might think of me weirdly, because of what I'm about to say next.

"During the AD period, humans formed militaries to fight against other humans. So the right-wing conservatives argued that the military was no different than an organized massacre."

"Huh?"

"However, most of the militants did not conscript themselves to kill. They simply wanted a stable income and life, and for self-realization—they didn't join the military to kill."

"..."

"I understand why you had to conscript yourself to the Armed Forces, Ensign. And you mustn't blame yourself for that. Didn't you conscript yourself to run away from your demanding father because there was no other way to protect yourself?"

When I said that, Ensign Meihowa's eyes became watery. She looked up at me with rabbit-like eyes.

"N-No one has ever told me those kinds of things before. Thank you for your words, Lezirth..."

"Don't sweat it. I mean it from the bottom of my heart, Ensign."

"..."

Ensign Meihowa blushed and averted her gaze away from me.

"B-But I will die here, without changing anything. To think that I would die by the hands of Elcros, after fleeing the arranged marriage that my father decided on, and the discrimination against Elcros. I'm doing this out of my own self-satisfaction, but what about you, Recruit Lezirth? No, Apprentice Lezirth, what about..."

"No."

I shook my head.

"Huh?"

Meihowa's emerald eyes looked back at me. I cleared my throat and extended my hand to her.

"Your finger, if you will, Ensign Meihowa."

"Why?"

"Just do it."

I was going to make her make a pinky promise with me; just as I had done with Admiral Louise. Still hesitant, she extended her hand and I forced her fingers around my own.

"Ensign Meihowa, you are a splendid officer, but also a splendid human before that. There is no need for you to degrade yourself. You mustn't degrade yourself."

"But..."

"Have some self-respect. And I will protect you. This is not the place you're supposed to die. Understood? Promise me."

"..."

Meihowa studied my face to see if I was being serious. But she quickly smiled brightly.

"Y-You Greenie... what's making you so confident?"

"I'm no Greenie."

I shook my head.

"I am the Vice Admiral, Lezirth Dawnbringer—the Commander of the Dawn Corps!"

◊ ◊ ◊

Elcros were held as slaves in the mines. So even if the Elcro launch an attack on the mines, they would have to hold their firepower in check.

Weapons mounted on spacecraft did not have the ability to differentiate between friends or foes, so there was no reason for the Elcros to launch a full power offensive on the mines.

Hence, one could say that the mines were holding hostages. And we were the ones who came to those who held the hostages, and tried to ask them to share some of their space with us.

So Commander Donna was being fair in some sense when she ordered our platoon to go on a suicide mission. Although this platoon consisted of mainly Replicants and half-breeds, she still would've ordered the same mission to any other platoon.

I chose to understand Commander Donna for now.

And she better understand what we were about to do now.

Admiral Louise stretched her fingers and took out the keyboard for the military computer. By using the computer, she hacked into the temporary security camera circuit and loaded up some visuals.

The circuit was cut off to all connections apart from the military one, and we were able to see everything in the mines by hacking into it. But of course, hacking into the circuit was like stealing candy from a baby for Admiral Louise. She was the one who created the Federation computer system in the first place.

If she was able to get visuals from the military connection, then that must mean she already finished hacking into the entire military computer system with ease. An ordinary hacker would boast about hacking into the system, but she must've kept quiet about it because it was elementary for her.

"Now, I will hack into the system to camouflage ourselves onto the Ateu Plains, so we'll trick them into thinking we were there. Also, please keep it a secret that I'm capable of something like this."

Ensign Meihowa and Sergeant Aroha were flabbergasted, after seeing what Admiral Louise just did. Someone who was able to hack into the military computer posed a threat to the entire Federation.

Asa and Elcro civilizations had no connections to the Human-Race. However, Replicants shared the same fundamental basis as human beings, and a Replicant being able to hack into the system was a game changing piece.

Hence, Replicant Rebels must be attempting to hack into the Federation system on a daily basis, but they wouldn't have succeeded just yet.

But Admiral Louise was hacking into the Federation system right before their eyes. Thanks to her, we were able to stay safe and 'carry out' Commander Donna's orders.

However, we realized there might not have been the need to go to all that trouble. Elcro miners were currently tied up and sprawled on the ground.

Damn it... Are they using them as human shields? If they plan to leave the Elcros like that for extended periods of time, they will all die from dehydration. This planet's heat was nothing to scoff at, after all.

"Damn it..."

"Hmm. The enemy won't lightly overlook the situation if there's something like that."

Admiral Louise started to concentrate. She must've used clairvoyance to sense any enemy's space fleets.

"The enemy is fast approaching. They are headed to the mines."

As expected. Having the Elcros act as human shields aggravated the enemy to launch an attack.

On this planet where the temperature would stay approximately 50 degrees Celsius during the day, the Elcro captives will die in one or two hours from dehydration.

The mining base must've used the Elcro captives as a warning and a hostage to the enemy, using a cruel method at that. But the enemy saw that action as an obligation to launch an attack.

Unmanned drones started to pour down from the sky like rain. The enemy must've deployed drones instead of the warships to intimidate the mining base first.

Surface-to-air missiles and rockets started to fire from the base in response. However, the unmanned drones outnumbered the missiles.

If that wasn't despairing enough, the sky split in half and a black object fell straight down like lightning from the sky, and stopped to hover slightly above the ground.

—Shoowooooo

The air burst into flames all of a sudden, and from the fire emerged a giant, black, beetle-shaped Alter-Armour.

Two gigantic horns, long limbs, a slim body but a frightening face, the gigantic Alter-Armour measuring over 40m.

It was the Kishin Diablo, nicknamed Black Tyrant!

The Diablo, one of the 12 Kishin-class Alter-Armours, originally in the Federation's possession, but was now in the hands of the Elcro. It descended from the atmosphere and landed near the mines.

The Kishin, while still hovering, rolled its neck and flexed its arms like a human fighter would before stepping into the ring. Two spots of light that shone from its black, shiny, armour on his head resembled human eyes.

Every single movement that it made was arrogant and prideful. Everyone could agree that it was overly arrogant, even though it didn't have any facial expressions. Also, Diablo didn't have any special equipment apart from the cape on its back.

[S-Shoot down the Diablo! We can break down the enemy's will if we destroy that!]

Commander Donna's voice echoed out from the military terminals.

Is this lady out of her mind? A Kishin wouldn't be called a Kishin if it could be defeated by something like surface-to-air missiles.

However, soldiers lived and died by the orders given. When the Commander's order was issued, every soldier stationed at the mines started to focus their attacks on Diablo.

A tremendous amount of missiles, plasma cannons and high-mass beams bombarded Diablo. However, when Diablo flapped its cape, its entire body turned half-transparent and all attacks passed through it.

It escaped the attack by using Phase Shift to remove itself from reality for a few moments.

Diablo escaped the attacks unscathed with ease. The soldiers' despair-ridden voices resounded over the terminals.

[Damn it!]

[Is that what Kishins are like?!]

[We're all gonna die!]

Complaints arose from the soldiers in the mines.

That was understandable of course, because all of their attacks were ignored by the Diablo in vain. Well, Phase Shift was not that much of a big deal, and seeing how the Federation soldiers were in despair, it seemed like they had never seen an Alter-Armour equipped with the ability before.

Ensign Meihowa clenched her lips.

"They'll be annihilated like this. What should we do? Should we go and aid them?"

"No."

I stopped her. The enemy had a Kishin-class Alter-Armour on the field and it would be suicidal to go aid them with a half-filled platoon. I could survive and hold up against it on my own, but I couldn't guarantee the safety of the other soldiers.

And furthermore, the Elcro miners were being held hostage, so the odds of great attacks from the enemy was low.

However, something surprising happened.

[Surrender.]

After avoiding the barrage of attacks, Diablo crossed its arms and spoke arrogantly while looking down at the mines. No, it was the pilot who spoke from the speakers on the Diablo, to be specific.

[I cannot sacrifice my innocent kin just to chase off you vile people, albeit the terrible crimes you've committed. Surrender. If you surrender now, I will spare your lives and spare you any torture. It is a waste to hold any emotions for ants like you.]

The pilot sure doesn't sound like someone who is recommending people to surrender.

Diablo bent down and stared at the mining base and shells began to pour down from the sky. Elcro-Asa-Replicant soldiers jumped out from the shells and surrounded the base.

The Federation soldiers abandoned their arms at the sight.

Ensign Meihowa turned off the visuals of the mining base.

"At least they won't die."

"That's a relief. We should stay low for now. Although the mining base soldiers won't die, there is no need for us to also be captured, is there?"

Ensign Meihowa sighed at what Admiral Louise said. She must've been really worried about the safety of the soldiers at the mining base. She was unusually sensitive for a soldier.

I also sighed in relief. Although I did not know who the pilot of Diablo was, I was glad that the pilot spared the lives of the Federation soldiers and wrapped up the situation nicely.

That was very commendable even though the pilot was an enemy.

However, something happened then.

[Arghhh!]

A yell sounded over the terminals. I jumped up in surprise and checked the computer visuals only to see the deserted platoon members, Chief Technician Oh and Lieutenant Imamura shooting at the unmanned drones.

Those fools! Why aren't they hiding when the enemy has a Kishin and other soldiers!

Just for the reference, we were currently hiding near the sea where mangrove-like plants were growing. This was a point that we chose after much consideration to hide the Spider and the Minion-class Alter-Armour. We were safe from the unmanned drones and surveillance vehicles.

"Oh no, Bravo Squad and the rest were just moving through the jungle when they were spotted by the unmanned surveillance vehicles."

Admiral Louise quickly explained the situation to us.

Damn it, why didn't they just surrender....

The pilot of Diablo appeared to be someone who disliked bloodshed, but there was a slim chance of the Kishin not attacking the squad that was acting independently, and without a hostage at that. Also, that chance was further reduced as Bravo Squad opened fire first.

[Arrgg! Die you alien fuckers!]

[Hiyaaa!]

Shouting lines that might be heard in an SF film from the AD, they fired their Coil Rifles. The rifles spat fire and hit the drones.

What was displayed on the computer was like a scene out of a war film.

"W-What should we do?"

Charlie Squad muttered to themselves while hiding in the water.

"What can we do—we'll die if we come out of here!"

"But are you saying that we should just watch Bravo Squad being killed?!"

"Damn it! Lieutenant Imamura can die for all I care! But Bravo Squad is..."

Conflict started to take place among the soldiers. Even Ensign Meihowa was trembling.

As their officer, she must not disregard the lives of her soldiers so easily. However, going to rescue them was suicidal and she knew that she would be sentencing everyone here to death if she ordered them to go and aid the Bravo squad.

Seeing her being torn between the choices that she had before her, I made my decision.

“I’ll go. Ensign Meihowa, you stay here and calm down Charlie Squad.”

“Are you out of your mind?! Bravo Squad is 130 kilometers away from us! By the time you arrive, they’ll...”

Ensign Meihowa’s words trailed off. Then, the other soldiers all complained.

“You’ll have to be a SSS-class Teleporter to travel 130km in an instant.”

“He must really think that he’s the Dawn Corps Commander.”

“T-Then isn’t he just a lunatic? Is it really OK to arm a lunatic?”

“OK, Lezirth. I’ll give you full support!”

Admiral Louise looked at me and hacked into the computer system again. She disconnected the communication between me and the other soldiers and ordered the others to take cover.

Other soldiers took cover, disappearing from my sight in the process and only Ensign Meihowa, Sergeant Aroha and Admiral Louise remained by my side.

“Please keep what you’re about to see a secret, Meihowa, Aroha.”

I winked at both of them, and attempted to teleport.

07. Isolation

There was a research centre that studied teleportation abilities on Epiece-2's moon, Epiece-2 α , and in that research centre was a teenage boy simply labelled 'A'.

The boy was an orphan, and he teleported over 100 times a day for the researchers, in order to earn money. And when A teleported and returned to the centre, he was no longer the same boy.

Boy A destroyed Epiece-2 α with frightening force, and by the time the navy arrived to take control of the situation, they found Epiece-2 α infested with space fungi. Every kind of life form on that moon had become nutrients for the fungi colony. Only boy A remained, walking around the fungi field without batting an eye.

When the gunmen arrived and blew off A's head, thousands of tentacles escaped from the boy's body. The tentacles greatly exceeded the boy's body mass, and covered the moon in moments.

As a result, the naval officers concluded that Epiece-2 α must be completely destroyed.

And henceforth, the moons of Epiece-2 have been named from Epiece-2 β .



Creatures unknown to men existed in hyperspace.

And the Teleportation ability, which was performed by jumping into that hyperspace, may spell the end of humanity.

Lezirth Dawnbringer, the Commander of Dawn Corps— a warrior who knows no fear.

That was what I was called, but there were two things that I was afraid of: dentists, and teleporting.

However, I had to resort to the latter when there was a need to.

“Urpp...”

I felt sick as soon as I returned back to the usual dimension. After reassuring myself that I was back in reality, I quickly checked the time on the computer.

A difference of 0.1 seconds, what a relief. If the difference were any greater, then it would have meant that I stayed in hyperspace for a longer period of time.

And the longer I stay in hyperspace, the greater the probability of the hyperspace polluting me. I might end up becoming something completely different. Even thinking about it gave me the creeps.

Luckily, 0.1 seconds was not a bad time.

I didn’t die or turn into something completely different during teleportation.

I want to find my Dawnbringer soon. No, desiring my Dawnbringer is too greedy of me, even any Alter-Armour would do.

The possibility of me being polluted by hyperspace was greatly reduced if I travel in an Alter-Armour. That was because Alter-Armour and teleportation both originated from Letix. Since Letix are inhabitants of hyperspace, they possessed strong resistance against the pollution.

Ah, now that I think about it, maybe I should’ve borrowed Ensign Meihowa’s Alter-Armour just for the teleport. Wait no, she would have to die for me to pilot it, since I am registered as the backup pilot.

No, I shouldn’t have to worry about the register system since Admiral Louise already hacked into the Federation system. But wait, that would be like announcing to the entire world that she just hacked the Federation computer system.

My hatred for teleporting grew even stronger as those thoughts raged inside my head. Damn it.

Suddenly, I spotted a hoard of unmanned surveillance vehicles flying approximately 1 km ahead of me.



Although Chief Technician Yeon-Sik Oh was part of the Technician staff, he had some experience with warfare.

They mounted the Colion Rifles on tripods, forming a makeshift mortar, and shot smart bombs up into the sky.

As the smart bombs detonated in mid-air, its shrapnel took down unmanned drones with ease. And thanks to the high oxygen density property of this planet, the shrapnel burst into flames and doubled the attack power.

Compared to the time when the platoon was nearly annihilated by two USVs while being led by Lieutenant Imamura, Chief Technician Oh was certainly doing significantly better, and against greater numbers at that.

However, he would get himself killed at this rate.

“Hey you! Stop fighting and take cover underwater, or just surrender!”

I suggested them to surrender as I approached them from behind. They didn’t bother turning around because they were too busy firing their Colion Rifles desperately.

“What! Who are you?! Do you want to get your ass taken to the courts?!”

“Greenie?! What’s going on? Weren’t you with the Charlie squad?!”

Some of the soldiers recognized me and started to freak out.

At that moment, Alter-Armours started to fly towards us, passing the unmanned drones. Alter-Armours were equipped with much larger equipments than a soldier, and the Alter-Armour leading them held a giant Colion Rifle aimed at the Bravo squad.

—Boom!

A giant explosion occurred from a single shot.

The plasma that flew at nearly Mach 40 disintegrated everything in its path. A great shockwave rushed towards the Bravo squad and it was strong enough to flip a military vehicle over.

However, I met the shockwave head on and redirected it with my hands.

—Kwaaaaa

The shockwave split in half and rushed to either side of me, shaking up the entire Azoran jungle. The Bravo squad members were protected from the shockwave thanks to me.

“Shit.... W-What just happened?”

“God damn! Was that just you, Lezirth?”

Bravo Squad members all asked me in surprise. I turned around and yelled at them.

“Everyone hide!”

The attack from the Alter-Armour just now meant that the enemy recognised us as a threat that should be taken out. They didn’t shoot the Colion Rifle just as a warning shot, or randomly into this vast jungle.

If we showed no response, they will think that we died from the attack just now, for sure. The only way for the Bravo squad to survive is to fool the Alter-Armour group and to let them pass over us.

Most of the Bravo squad understood my intentions and hid underwater, in the swamp and under the tree roots. Chief Technician Oh also obeyed me and jumped into the water. At that instant...

—Boom!

The head of the Alter-Armour that attacked us just now exploded. The armour around its head was destroyed but the damage wasn’t sufficient enough to stop it from functioning.

I turned around in surprise and saw Lieutenant Imamura holding the Colion Rifle and snickering.

“Take that, you fools. This is...”

“You dumbass!”



I yelled at him in shock.

Things started to unfold as I expected! The Alter-Armours saw the direction of the attack and aimed their guns this way. It wasn't the lead Alter-Armour who was aiming at us, but all of them.

With firepower much greater than our normal Colion Rifles, I could just imagine the Bravo squad being wiped out instantly.

"We can't have that!"

The enemies' guns fired away at the same time, and I used my telekinesis to project a barrier.

I have to resist the attacks from the enemy Alter-Armours and protect the Bravo squad! But at the same time... I have to trick the enemies into believing that their attacks were effective. Otherwise, I would have to fight the Kishin Diablo myself, but that was a stretch, even for me.

—Bzzz!

Plasma shots were deflected by the barrier. As the gray barrier blocked all heat and light from hitting us, I turned around.

All of the Bravo squad members were in hiding and screaming at the top of their lungs. However, they were safe thanks to my barrier.

However...

—Crackle!

Some of the plasma storm touched the water. With that, water quickly boiled and electrocuted every soldier in the water.

Damn it!

"Gasp... gasp... you... you blocked the Alter-Armours' attacks? You must be a SSS-class psychic!"

Without even bothering to catch his breath, Lieutenant Imamura talked to me while clenching his Colion Rifle in his chest.

“This is an order, soldier. Fight! Destroy those Alter-Armour and retreat! This is an order! You’ll end up in the courts if you dare to refuse!”

Lieutenant Imamura must be at his wits end, because he was already foaming at the mouth. Only a few hours had passed since the last time I saw this man, but he was shrivelled up beyond recognition.

The jungle on Azoran-3 was quite humid and one needed to hydrate himself frequently; but it seemed like Bravo Squad refused to give any water to Lieutenant Imamura. And as a consequence, he was having a mental breakdown.

“Heh heh heh! Die, all of you!”

Although I still had my barrier up, Lieutenant Imamura tried to shoot up at the Alter-Armours.

Damn it, does he plan on getting killed?

I quickly spun the Bayonet and slashed through the Colion Rifle in his hand to prevent him from shooting.

“Kuu! How dare you! What do you think you’re doing to your superior! Ah, I see! Why you! You must be on the Elcros’ side! I knew something was wrong when you helped that Elcro woman!”

Lieutenant Imamura started to charge at me for no reason. When I avoided his charge, he ended up going through the grey barrier.

And... he disintegrated in a blink of an eye.

That was to be expected because he received all of the Alter-Armours’ attacks head-on; it would be impossible to even recover his corpse.

“Lieutenant! Damn it!”

Although he wasn’t a great person, losing someone before your eyes was still painful. And he was in this state because he suffered torture from the Bravo squad.

Should I even let these guys live? I looked at the Bravo squad for a moment, but decided to put that thought on hold. I’ll save them for now.

Soon, the Alter-Armours' attacks ceased.

"Hmm... you reckon they'll be alive after all that?"

"Let's deploy the surveillance vehicles."

Those Alter-Armour pilots weren't communicating via the terminal but via normal methods.

I quickly spread the cape on my left shoulder.

This Psychic Reacting Optical Camouflage cape was able to hide the user from light, heat or sonar sensors, by supplying a slight amount of psychic power.

A powerful psychic user like myself would be able to hide himself without using a cape like this, but using one can increase the area being obscured from the sensors.

The USVs activated their heat and sonar sensors while flying through the jungle. However, there was a plasma storm that still remained after the attack, so heat and sonar sensors were of no use; we just had to avoid being caught visually.

Thankfully, the surveillance vehicles scanned the jungle floor and recorded the broken vehicles, equipment and a few corpses that were caught up by the storm.

"They're all dead."

"Don't you think we have to look into it in more detail?"

"Nah, it's fine. Judging from the attack from before, the group wasn't that big anyway. There's no way they could possibly resist bombardment from Alter-Armours. Our attacks are powerful enough to melt down fortresses, you know?"

"Then let's go back and report."

The Alter-Armours lost interest and returned.



Despite my attempts, only five people survived from the Bravo squad and the rest died. The ones who hid underwater were electrocuted by the plasma attacks, and those who weren't wearing their helmets throughout the plasma storm also died.

The helmets supplied by the Federation were an open-space type, so it was easy to disregard it as useless, but it was equipped with an air filtration system. It would be foolish of people to take it off just because it's uncomfortable.

The five survivors were too injured to stay conscious and passed out.

I forced them into combat suits and switched on the Life Support System (LSS), since they were too injured to be stable with the normal LSS in the military uniform.

Luckily, the figures on the combat suit LSS told me they were going to be okay and will recover.

However, that was assuming that these soldiers receive some medical attention, nutrients and water. They will certainly die if I just leave them here.

"Accompanied Teleportation is really dangerous... and there are five of them at that. What should I do?"

AT was much more dangerous compared to Single Teleportation. Teleporting with objects was slightly better, but there was the possibility of luring out hyperspace monsters when teleporting with another human.

But I can't leave them here and I don't have the right equipment to take them by normal methods... Must I teleport?

Luckily for me, these soldiers were unconscious. They were more stable than a cognitive human who would be flailing around.

I took them and teleported close to where Charlie Squad was in hiding.

"Ugh... damn it, I'm gonna die like this."

Even I found AT to be extremely difficult. Theoretically, I could teleport solo over 10,000 km if I'm not attacked by any hyperspace monsters on the jump.

However, with solar flare, electronic waves, human life force, other factors, and interference, that figure was brought down to 4000 km.

But from that, taking others along further lowered that distance to about 500 km. Human life force itself was interference in teleportation, yet I still managed to pull that off...

Luckily, we all arrived safe and sound. I checked for the time difference and there was 0.4 seconds difference—a good figure considering I just jumped with 5 people.

‘I could’ve ended up being lost in hyperspace. I hope no pollution took place.’

I gathered my breath and waited for the light-headedness to pass. At that moment, something rustled from the jungle.

Huh? Is it a monster?

I clenched the Bayonet and the Rifle for the worst case scenario. However, the faces that emerged from the jungle were very familiar to me.

“Lezirth!”

“Ah, Louise... and Ensign Meihowa?”

Admiral Louise was shocked when she saw the injured Bravo Squad.

“Did you teleport with five people accompanying you? How could you do something so dangerous!”

“Ah, they appear to be unconscious, so it was okay.”

Admiral Louise looked at me unhappily. She seemed to be upset at the fact that I recklessly risked my life to save others.

One might say that she was overreacting when I actually had done a good deed, but I understood her perfectly, because as a psychic user herself, she knew better than anyone else how dangerous Accompanied Teleportation was.

She was genuinely concerned about me, more than anyone else.

“Oh my word... what happened?”

Ensign Meihowa and Sergeant Aroha were shocked at the state of Bravo Squad. They were in a terrible shape and unconscious, but alive.

“To think... you would actually rescue the Bravo squad!”

Ensign Meihowa looked at me in disbelief. Sergeant Aroha raised her thumb and winked.

“We should be calling you a war hero rather than a Greenie now. You might actually receive a medal. I would believe you if you say you are the Vice Admiral Lezirth.”

“Please keep our powers a secret from the higher-ups.”

Admiral Louise’s expression became stern as she warned them.

I agreed with her about hiding our identity. The current Federation was not the same Federation that she and I once joined. Revealing our identities might end with us being purged again.

“Why? But your powers are...”

“Because we are not registered psychic users. We would like to remain that way. Lezirth, did they witness your powers?”

“I believe they did. Although it was only for a moment before they passed out.”

“Hmm, then I will modify their memories of the event.”

After saying that, Admiral Louise looked at Ensign Meihowa and Sergeant Aroha. Sergeant Aroha flexed and hunched her shoulders in surprise.

“Woah, so scary. Okay, I won’t say a thing. You don’t plan on modifying my memories as well, do you?”

“I won’t say a thing.”

Ensign Meihowa also read the mood and agreed to it.

Admiral Louise smiled shyly. However, those golden eyes of hers weren’t smiling at all.

"Fu fu, yes, I understand. I knew I could trust you, Ensign Meihowa and Sergeant Aroha. You know how to respect people."

Wow, she even scared me. Isn't she indirectly blackmailing Ensign Meihowa and Sergeant Aroha right now? Yet she wasn't challenging their dignity. Someone like her is extremely terrifying when angered.

"Gre... no, Lezirth, are you okay? Are you injured?"

Ensign Meihowa looked at me. Well, there wasn't a single scratch on me, I just felt light-headed. But the Ensign sounded gentler than before. Was that just in my head though?

"I'm fine. I'm just a bit worn out."

"Hmm, but... ah, that's right. I have to thank you first. Thank you, Apprentice Lezirth. We would all be dead right now if it wasn't for you."

Ensign Meihowa thanked me.

"Ah, no problem. I only did what was necessary and I wasn't the only one who suffered. That aside, we have to move these guys quickly. Otherwise, they'll die. Huh?"

As I talked, Ensign Meihowa held my sleeve.

"... Ah, u-um, and I have another thing to say, Apprentice Lezirth."

Hmm, what could it be? I wondered what this half-Elcro girl wanted, as she held onto my sleeve with slight hesitation. But for some reason I could feel daggers flying at me from a pair of golden eyes beside me.

I wonder why? I turned around in confusion and saw Admiral Louise smiling.

"You should rest if you're tired, Lezirth. This way, please."

She cut in between Ensign Meihowa and I and held my arm. But there's no need to go that far...

"Hmm."

“Whew...”

Ensign Meihowa and Admiral Louise’s gaze met in mid-air and produced sparks.

Hmm, what was that? I feel like I just saw some ‘bzzt’ spark effects just now.

“N-Now then.”

I quickly busied myself moving the survivors with the help of the Charlie squad.

◊ ◊ ◊

In case of an emergency, the Federation standard kit included a range of necessary equipment for survival. With that equipment, it was even possible to survive in a planet without an atmospheric layer, but they performed best where oxygen was abundant.

In that respect, Azoran-3 was perfect for survival due to its high oxygen density.

I installed the electronic, UV-ray and sonar deflecting camouflage net over the mangrove jungle and jumped down from the tree.

“Hiiick!”

The soldiers who were watching me from underneath yelped in surprise. It wasn’t surprising to hear them yelp because mangrove trees measured approximately 7~8m tall, and jumping down with the Azoran-3 gravity in effect was no easy feat.

However, I grabbed a vine on my way down, slowing my fall, and landed lightly on the ground.

“What are you all surprised about? Hurry up and set up the water filter.”

However, the soldiers were slow to move. Ah, of course. They aren’t even properly trained Space Marines, they were just improperly trained Recruits up until now.

I personally took the water filter and installed it in the mineral-rich sea. It filtered out minerals from the water, as well as microbes, and was able to purify approximately 50 litres per hour. On a planet like Azoran-3, where the water was

quite clear, we might be able to receive purified water at a faster rate. Only one was supplied to each squad, but luckily there was a spare, and I was able to install two.

“Hmm, I should lay the pipes along the mangrove roots so that it doesn’t get caught by a surveillance vehicle... I suppose the shell will do as the water tank.”

The training shell interior was completely welded together, so it was both airtight and waterproof. If I hook the water pipe into the shell, nearly 5 tonnes of water could be stored. Since we don’t know how long we’ll stay on this planet... we must be prepared for the worst.

“Squad Leader, use the Power-Armour and move the training shell under the mangrove roots.”

The Squad Leader used the Power-Armour and lifted the training shell. However, he was not familiar with using the Power-Armour just yet, so his movements were very unstable.

I secretly used my psychic powers to aid its steps and directed him to set the shell down where I told him to.

“Now then, let’s connect the pipes, shall we?”

After switching the Colion Rifle to welding mode, I turned it on. Thankfully, it was working perfectly.

I used it to weld the water pipe onto the training shell and formed a giant water tank from it. In order to ensure stable water pressure, I attached a medical cylinder pressurized pump into the mouth of the pipe.

Although I was recognized as a Greenie among the soldiers, my skills shone with my war experiences. I may not have been able to perform at the best of my abilities because of the sudden 120 years’ worth of change, but those mistakes will never happen again.

“Good, that’s done. We should even be able to take showers when we collect enough water in the tank. The only problem is the temperature...”

Azoran-3's temperature climbed to a staggering figure of 50 degrees Celsius during the day. The issue was not the heat, however, but the fact that it was very humid and felt like a sauna.

The planet was very windy and humid. Although these mangroves provided some cooling effect by absorbing the sea water and decreasing the temperature by 20 degrees, it still was 30 degrees with 80% humidity levels.

I continued to check the temperature and the humidity levels, and searched for an ideal place for us to rest. I ripped out the cooler from a broken vehicle and let the temperatures stabilize by disconnecting the radiator under the water.

Letting the heat escape in the air would set off detection by surveillance vehicles, but they would not be able to detect the change of heat in the water, and the radiator's efficiency would also rise—it was like killing two birds with one stone.

And so, when I set up a tent near the mangrove tree roots, and turned on the Thorium nuclear-powered cooler, the temperature dropped to approximately 20 degrees. That alone made water droplets form on the tent-top.

"People might even catch a cold when sleeping like this. Maybe I should split the tent into male, female and officers' quarters."

As I constructed makeshift quarters, recruits gathered around me. I wondered what they were about to do when Charlie Squad's leader extended his hand to me.

"Erm, hey, Lezirth? Sorry for bullying you before."

"Huh?"

"Um... I'm really sorry about before. I excluded you from the squad, so can you forgive us?"

Ah, that's right... all of the squad leaders did exclude me before. They must still be caught up about that fact. I smirked at them.

It was true that I was excluded, and felt despair at the treatment of greenies'. However, I was disappointed at myself, not anyone else.

No, I didn't even consider them my equal to be upset or angry about. Isn't it ridiculous to picture a Vice Admiral to be bickering with fresh Recruits?

I was looking down on them, of course, I was being extremely arrogant. The fact of the matter is, I was a Vice Admiral, but that was in the past. I had to fight with these guys for our survival.

“It’s fine, I’m not that concerned with it. Don’t we have to combine our strengths for our survival and for the future? That aside, hurry up and carry the goods into the quarters. The camouflage net is only useful for protection from electronic or sonar detection, but it is useless against optic sensors.”

I left them after giving them my orders.

Sergeant Aroha and Ensign Meihowa were coming back after hiding the Spider and the Alter-Armour under the sea. They appeared to have searched long and hard for an ideal place that was undetected by radar or by sight.

“Oh my, you already finished setting up the quarters?”

“Not bad!”

They shouted their praise while looking at the water filter system and the sleeping quarters.

“Did you do as I instructed you to, Ensign?”

The Ensign and the acting Platoon Leader had the authority to restrict hyperspace communication amongst the soldiers.

I instructed her to restrict all usage of hyperspace communication by the soldiers as well as the restriction of terminals. That was because the Federation might give up on our rescue completely.

This platoon was named the ‘Bomb Platoon’. Hence, that meant that there was a high chance of the Federation abandoning us, let alone rescuing us. And if the soldiers become aware of this fact, they might become suicidal, or even rebel.

“I did, but... is that really okay? This is restricting the soldiers’ rights, and aren’t you also a soldier yourself, Lezirth?”

I’m an officer, damn it!

But there’s no way she would believe me. I nodded my head.

"That is the best option for our survival."

I handed a bottle of purified water to her. Ensign Meihowa and Sergeant Aroha were sweating furiously after wandering around the jungle in 40~50 degree heat.

"Ah, t-thanks. H-How kind of you, Apprentice Lezirth."

Ensign Meihowa took the water bottle and handed it to Sergeant Aroha.

"The current situation on the hyperspace comm channel is chaotic."

Ensign Meihowa explained while she wiped away her sweat.

Archimedes was destroyed and the news of Rebel Replicants forming an alliance with other alien races to combat the Federation has caused a state of panic in the Federation.

Elcro, Asa and Rebel Replicants claimed that their alliance was formed to combat their common enemy: the Federation. Their official name was the 'Criminal Freedom Alliance'. Their current goal was to abolish the totalitarian rule that the Federation held.

This alliance was surprisingly formed by the Human-Race, Elcro, Asa, and Replicants. The spokesman for this Alliance was a human, although that may have been the case only for a symbolic meaning.

A handsome man in the prime of his life began to speak with confidence, and information about this man was displayed beneath him.

Richard Kwak. He was a former politician of the Federation, but surprisingly he joined the Alliance and became their spokesman. By doing so, this gave the impression to humans, that the Alliance was not against humanity as a whole, but rather it was a peaceful alien alliance that included the Human-Race as well.

This was a very wise political move. In fact, it was too good to believe.

The appearance of the Alliance, and the loss of Archimedes caused every company's shares to plummet, and some planets apparently started to stock up on food. Banks ran out of money for the customers to withdraw and the Financial Supervision Committee forbade all banks to allow withdrawals.

"Who knows when we'll be rescued at this rate. I think... Lezirth was right in restricting all communication by the soldiers."

She stole a quick peek at me after saying that. She had that look of 'just who is this guy' in her eyes.

"I criticized you without knowing your true value. I apologize, Apprentice Lezirth."

Ensign Meihowa unhappily opened a pack of energy-gel. Energy-gel was a real jack-of-all-trades when it came down to nutrients supplement, ease of consumption and taste.

When we run out of these energy-gels, we would have to switch to dry rations, then to hunting wild animals on Azoran-3 for consumption.

Although we had 2 months' worth of rations remaining, no, a lot longer because of those deaths, I was worried that the Federation wouldn't rescue us.

"Isn't the Alliance... quite attractive for you, because you carry Elcro blood, Ensign?"

Even I was almost convinced on joining the Alliance. However, the whole thing seemed to be fishy. It was far too political and veteran-like for a newly formed group. The timing of their surprise attack on Archimedes and the announcement of their alliance was too accurate.

Ensign Meihowa must've had the same feelings as me, because she looked at me with indifferent eyes.

"If there were no politics involved, I would say that it's quite attractive."

Ensign Meihowa loaded up the visuals of Richard Kwak and glared at him.

"Why's that?"

"Because this is the man who my father, Commander Liu, attempted to marry me off to."

"..."

Damn, then the Alliance wasn't completely clean either. Then again, I suppose the possibility of the Alliance forming without any shady deals would be impossible, because of the racial differences.

"And where is Louise by the way?"

Sergeant Aroha asked after looking around.

"She should be meditating at the most shaded place in the mangroves."

Admiral Louise Maynard was one of the very few Clairvoyance users among the psychics. The Clairvoyance ability allowed her to collect information without launching an unmanned surveillance vehicle, so she was able to study the enemy's movements without being caught. She was a crucial piece for our survival here.

"I need to bring her back here, now that I've installed a cooler in the quarters, and also, I want you two to keep her powers a secret. So why don't you let her stay with you in the officers' quarters?"

If she shows her skills while being with the other soldiers, the information could leak out. Anyone with Clairvoyance was immediately summoned to the Military Headquarters and she would be...

"Okay. I was her roommate before, after all. What about you, Platoon Leader?"

"I also agree to it. No, that's what I want."

Ensign Meihowa didn't seem to mind it at all.

But it's what she wanted? What does she mean?



After asking that favour to Meihowa and Aroha, I went out to find Admiral Louise.

She was meditating under a mangrove tree but opened her eyes when I approached her. Her golden eyes sparkled under the mangrove tree's shadow. Was that an after effect of using her powers?

“Are you okay?”

I passed a bottle of water to her when I saw her sweating buckets. She accepted the bottle from me and nodded her head.

“Yes, I’m fine. Thank you, Lezirth.”

“I installed a cooler, so please take a break in the quarters. I asked Ensign Meihowa and Sergeant Aroha to allow you to sleep with them in their quarters.”

“But it’s not time to sleep just yet. And I wish to wash myself. I sweated too much...”

“There should be enough water in the tank, so you can use that.”

Although I told her that, she jumped into the sea that the mangrove roots were dipping in. With a splash sound, water flew in all directions.

“Ah, that’s better. Come on in, Lezirth.”

“No, but I...”

After hesitating for a moment, I also jumped in. The sea, surprisingly, was cooler than I thought, compared to this 50 degree weather.

“Lezirth, what do you think about the current Federation?”

Admiral Louise approached and asked me. I looked straight at her golden eyes.

In what way did she mean? Did she also watch the Federation clip?

“To be honest, I believe the Federation is at fault. The war against the Letix was for survival, but this time, I believe it is an unnecessary war that is fought for profit. There was no need to wage war against the Asa or Elcro races...”

“Yes, I also think the same. However, I ended up being re-enlisted into the army after waking up from the cold sleep, without having the chance to think about the situation. No, I was forcefully re-enlisted when I tried to consult the Armed Forces on the situation.”

“...”

She was also forcefully re-enlisted into the Armed Forces without a choice or a second thought, because we were already part of the Armed Forces. However, the Federation has changed over the last 120 years.

The only ones that haven't changed were me and her. We were prisoners of time in this world set 120 years in the future.

The only one who could understand me was her, and the only one who could understand her was me.

"What must we do now? Must we remain in the Federation like this, and become thieves and invaders? Or must we betray the Federation that we fought to protect, and attack it?"

What Admiral Louise asked me has been on my mind for a while but I wasn't able to say it out loud.

If she, the one who hacked into the Federation's computer system, chose to betray the Federation, she would be able to end it without even using the Tetragrammaton.

Destroying the Federation, that certainly was an option, but it wasn't one that I was willing to take. Furthermore, I did not trust the Alliance.

"Why don't we keep an eye on the situation for just a bit longer. I don't think this is a choice that we must make on the spot. We should keep our eyes on the situation, and then come to a decision. As for the Alliance... I cannot trust it."

"I also think so, Lezirth. Then I will follow you until that time comes."

Admiral Louise held out her hand to me after she spoke.

"Please guide me."

"There is no way I would refuse."

I held her hand.

08. Dead Sign

My mind was disturbed.

Vice Admiral Lezirth Dawnbringer of the 1st Space Marines, Commander of Dawn Corps; the pillar that will uphold the future of the Federation.

There was a time when I was called that, but it wasn't now.

...

No, no, what am I thinking!

I should still be called that!

I am the one who shoulders the futures of the government and humanity, and the future of the galaxy to some extent!

However, I am currently an ordinary soldier and my life was on the line because of the Federation's cruelty.

But what am I doing?

Where am I? Who am I?

"Here comes the ball!"

Suddenly, a multi-colored beach ball flew towards me. I hit the ball away with my hand. Waves splashed against my chest.

"Good job, Lezirth!"

Sergeant Aroha laughed and received the beach ball. Wearing a high-leg, reddish-brown bikini that matched her ardent red hair, her voluptuous breasts wobbled every time she moved.

They were a threatening pair. And the bikini that was supporting those breasts was a testimony to the finest synthetic fibre that the Federation had to offer.

But of course, it would be nice if those strings just snapped.

No, that was a mistake. I did not mean that at all. Everyone just skip a line!

When the beach ball fell onto the water, Admiral Louise swam after it and picked it up. In Admiral Louise's case, she wore a 3-piece swimsuit as well as a T-shirt because she felt embarrassed. As she swam towards the ball, the sight of her white legs, her hips and the pink swimsuit bottoms entered my sight.

I wonder why women felt less embarrassed about wearing swimsuit bottoms rather than underwear, when there wasn't much of a difference in the area covered by the two.

Maybe they don't feel as embarrassed because they don't consider swimsuits as underwear!?

Those meaningless thoughts ran through my head. Durr... what am I even doing?

"Hyah!"

When Admiral Louise threw the ball, Ensign Meihowa caught it this time. She leaped out from the water like a ballerina or an acrobat, and caught the ball.

Although she was slightly smaller than Aroha, her firm breasts and healthy glow were eye-catching. The tri-coloured racing swimsuit, coloured black, navy and white, matched her wings nicely.

But what am I doing right now?



So, Azoran-3 was hot.

And the place where we were located happened to be the area with the most abundant sunlight.

Why did we land in this area, you ask?

That was because we had to land and train in the area near the equator in order to use the planet's rotation to get the extra boost when leaving this planet.

However, the hot mangrove jungle of Azoran-3 caused us to sweat 2 litres every hour, despite the occasional downpour.

And as we drank more and more water to rehydrate ourselves, we were suffering from the lack of appetite and indigestion.

We originally spent our time shivering in fear inside the quarters. The USVs flew over our heads and many warp gates started to appear, adding to our fear.

The Elcro-Asa-Replicant Alliance returned Azoran-3 to the Elcros and began to reclaim the Azoran system as their own again. Elcros returned to Azoran-3 and began to rework their toils and reconstruct their destroyed cities.

Warp gates were an intergalactic transportation technique used by the Elcro. Hence, the appearance of warp gates signalled the arrival of Elcros on this planet.

And so, we were even more driven by the fear.

◊ ◊ ◊

A day passed like that.

Admiral Louise instantly understood the movement patterns of those surveillance vehicles. She analysed the movement patterns of the surveillance vehicles as well as the time frame for a rotation, so we only had to be on our guards during some periods of time.

But even then we all stayed in our quarters and did not bother going outside.

◊ ◊ ◊

And another day passed.

We expanded our safety net, securing a larger safe area, and we also returned to the site where the Bravo squad was attacked and recovered some extra goods and equipment. One of the goods recovered was a box that contained some necessities for survival, but not for military use.

We do not know how long this situation will continue for. So we carefully recovered a large amount of goods without being caught by the surveillance vehicles.

The box was taken to the officers' quarters and opened there so that the other soldiers wouldn't see the contents. If there were food supplies or important goods inside, a fight might break out amongst the men.

Soldiers fought over anything and everything when they were driven to their limits. The last thing we wanted was exactly that, so it was safer to leave the box in the hands of the officers.

"The box has been damaged from the impact during the landing, Lezirth. Open it for me."

I left the box in the officers' quarters for the reason I just explained above, yet Sergeant Aroha still called me into the officers' quarters. Well, I suppose that just shows how much she trusts me.

Although I was labelled a greenie during the training, I was the one who led the soldiers and set up the quarters when things quickly turned serious. Thanks to that, the way the soldiers treated me was completely different now.

"Well, she could always melt it open with the welding function on the Colion Rifles..."

I walked into the officers' quarters while muttering, but feeling somewhat happy at the same time. And I picked up the damaged box with my hands.

—Crack.

The metal box broke and cracked open.

Toothpaste, sunscreen, towels, underwear and various other necessities spilled out from the box. Swimsuits and beach balls also came out.

Why are those there when this is a military necessities box?

"Ah! No way! No, no. Could this be...?"

I showed the swimsuits to Sergeant Aroha with a look of disbelief. She looked at the swimsuits with great interest.

"Hmm? They seem to be brand new. Look, they still have the tags attached to them."

"Ah, this must be a personal box. I thought something was strange. I thought the military started to put swimsuits in the necessities boxes now. There's no way these can be for military use."

"But this is great. Why don't we try these on since it's hot outside?"

"Ehhh? Wait, what?"

I couldn't believe my ears and I looked at her.

Sergeant Aroha started to strip down her uniform slowly before my eyes....

"Whoa! W-What are you doing? Are you out of your mind, Sergeant! We're stuck in the middle of a war situation here, you know! We have to be prepared for a fight at all times!"

"But we'll be weakened mentally if we continue to be on the edge. And it's so hot and stressful."

"That's why I set up the cooler."

"But it's too boring to stay inside the tents all the time."

Get over it!

At that moment, Ensign Meihowa and Admiral Louise walked in.

"What's with the box?"

"Ah, this is..."

When I explained about the box, Admiral Louise peeked at the box and the contents.

"Good."

Even Ensign Meihowa agreed with Sergeant Aroha. Huh? What did I just hear? I seriously suspected my ears for a moment. What's so good about it?



All of the soldiers cheered.

They were already bored to tears with card games, gambling and simple computer games and they all cheered at the sudden discovery of water-play goods. Not only that, the current situation with the quarters has been continuously improving.

We knew about the enemy's surveillance vehicle movement patterns. And after making an automatic motion sensor out of mechanical parts scavenged from some vehicles, we could afford to have less people rostered as guards. The purified water tank was at a satisfactory volume and the quarters were air-conditioned well. The only thing missing was suitable recreation to pass the time.

“Even if we’re in a stalemate, we should maintain our physical and mental health in a good state. We will be playing in the water while standing on guard by a roster.”

Ensign Meihowa gave out her orders while wearing the one-piece racing swimsuit and a pair of sunglasses.

The male soldiers cheered, seeing the long legs, the slim waist line and the curves of her chest.

And the female soldiers glared at them.

“Whew~ it’s so hot. I’m going to get burned even if I stay under the shadow at this rate.”

Sergeant Aroha, dressed in a bikini, walked out behind the Ensign. She was... well, even I couldn’t stop myself looking at her. Hmm, how should I say this?

The bikini was reddish--brown in colour, with an almost leather-like feel. The lower part of the bikini set was a high-leg type that made a sharp V shape on her hips, and the bra part was... a wire-free type.

Will that be okay? What if it just falls apart while she's moving?

"Now then, everyone into the water!"

When Ensign Meihowa gave her order, soldiers jumped into the water at the same time.

"Uuu."

A while after the soldiers jumped into the water, Admiral Louise poked her head out from the officers' quarters. The way she held her head out from the entrance, while hiding the rest of her body was... insanely cute.

"L-Lezirth?"

"Yes?"

"Ah! Umm, well... what should I say. I-I'm just a bit embarrassed."

"R-Really? I-I think you look fine."

I scratched my cheek while looking in a different direction.

Admiral Louise slowly waddled out... like a child slowly approaching a hot bath, and she slowly extended her foot outside. I nearly stopped breathing the instant I saw her white legs reveal themselves from the quarters.

Admiral Louise turned her head shyly after stepping out. She wore a 3-piece swimsuit: a pink bikini set underneath a sky-blue skirt.

Her chest size was indeed humble compared to Ensign Meihowa or Sergeant Aroha, but she was also definitely cute. And the way she had her face shyly facing a different direction... also made me blush.

"I-It doesn't look strange?"

"N-No, you look pretty."

"R-Really? You're not lying? But I'm, well... a bit lacking in my chest... hmm."

Admiral Louise muttered under her breath and began to wear a white t-shirt over the top. I tried to stop her in surprise.

“Eh, why are you doing that? You look nice.”

“I-It’s fine if only Lezirth sees me! It’s too embarrassing to let the others see.”

“I-Is that so?”

Although I did not know what she meant... it didn’t feel that bad. Yes, I saw her and that’s good enough for me.

We awkwardly stood in silence and looked elsewhere. Although we weren’t looking at each other... I could hear her breathing.

I could hear some insects and other animals from a distance in the jungle. I felt like we would continue to stand like this while listening to those cries.

“Um... Lezirth?”

Something touched my arm. Startled, I looked to see Admiral Louise carefully grabbing my arm with her hand.

But then, something happened. Sergeant Aroha wolf-whistled and began to approach us.

“Our cute Greenie! Won’t you rub some sunscreen on me?”

“Huh? No, w-why ask me to do that?”

“I’ve always wanted to sexually harass a co-worker! Come on, hurry up!”

“Eh?”

I was unwillingly dragged away by Sergeant Aroha. Suddenly, I heard someone kicking something behind me. I turned around and saw Admiral Louise with a grumpy expression.

“I see, I have to take care of those thieving cats... Fufufu.”

Admiral Louise started laughing by herself. Will this be okay?

“Now then, our Greenie! This way!”

Sergeant Aroha unhooked the bra part of her bikini (it was a front-hook type), laid down on top of a sheet and revealed her back to me. I could only let out a sigh.

“Couldn’t you do this with some other girls?”

“Ensign Meihowa is half-Elcro, so she doesn’t need sunscreen on her back.”

“Ah, because of those wings?”

An Elcro’s wings produced some photons and electromagnetic pulses. Highly trained Elcros could use them as Solar Sails and fly by redirecting solar flares.

But of course, that was only possible because Elcros were able to control the photons and EMP beyond the surface of their wings. They could use the same technique to block off all radiation from reaching their body.

“But wait, I nearly got tricked. You can still ask her to rub the sunscreen on you, can’t you? That’s got nothing to do with it.”

Surely the Ensign would still rub it on her even if she doesn’t need it for herself. They did seem to be close anyway.

As I logically thought about the issue at hand, Sergeant Aroha formed a circle shape with her lips playfully.

“Come on, I’ll also rub it on you when you’re done, Lezirth.”

“.....”

That offer just now was... very attractive. It was indeed, but my skin felt extremely prickly. It wasn’t because of the sun, but because of the other males’ sharp glares.

“Damn it! Why is it always that Greenie!”

“No, we can’t call him Greenie now!”

“I can’t accept this!”

All those males were glaring at me from the water. They reminded me of those water ghouls who hated the people on land.

Sigh.

I sighed and squeezed out some sunscreen onto my hands.

“I’ll do it as fast as I can.”

I slowly brought my hands onto her back.

Hmm, this feeling is...

Whoa! What is this!

Sergeant Aroha appeared to be quite muscular, but on the contrary, she was quite soft. It was like I was touching a bouncy, but firm, rubber ball. My hand sank slightly into her back, but it was firm and felt pleasant to touch.

And her skin was so soft! The way my hand spread the sunscreen on her back felt unbelievably good.

Can a human hand feel this much pleasure?!

Why was my breath becoming coarse?

I couldn’t handle it and took my hands off. The soldiers were glaring daggers at me, but this should be fine, right?

I used my psychokinesis to thinly apply the rest of the sunscreen and literally layered a coat of sunscreen on her in one go. My hand felt so good... but I feel like I would die at this rate, so I should end it here.

“Whoa, what was that?”

“What do you mean, what? It’s just sunscreen. There, I’m done.”

“Tsk. What a bore. And I was just about to feel good.”



Sergeant Aroha grumbled and hooked her bra back on while still lying down.

I tried my hardest not to look... but my eyes couldn't help but to drift towards her. However, she skillfully fixed herself up and stood up.

"Now, you lay down here, dear customer. Now it's my turn, isn't it?"

"What? What did you say?"

Holding the sunscreen tube between her breasts, the Sergeant looked down at me and smiled.

Whoa! W-What? What's going to happen!?

"Now, now! Don't chicken out."

Sergeant Aroha smiled widely and dumped me on the sheet she was just lying on.

"Kugh!"

"Dayum!"

"What's with this discrimination?!"

I could hear the male soldiers growling from everywhere.

"Sergeant Aroha! My back is itchy!"

"Please rub sunscreen on me as well!"

Sergeant Aroha turned around and looked at them with an indifferent expression and pointed at the sunscreen box next to her.

"Just rub it on with each other."

"No! T-That's!"

Hmm, she wasn't wrong on a logical level. Everyone clicked their tongues and retreated while sighing.

Hey guys? Didn't you say that your back was itchy?

“Now then Lezirth, are you prepared?”

Sergeant Aroha was coming closer to me, bit by bit. Ah... so scary! I was scared, but at the same time, I was unable to get up.

Is this what a frog feels like when petrified by a snake? I see! This must be what they call a fear of predators!

As I thought about those things,

—Splat!

Sunscreen was applied on my back instantly. It was applied by psychokinesis though. Who could it be?

“Ah, you’re here, Louise.”

“Hmph! Why don’t you let Lezirth go? Can’t you see he dislikes it?”

“Ah, L-Lezirth, did you dislike it?”

Sergeant Aroha asked with a sorrowful expression. I knew she was just kidding, but... I can’t say I disliked it, because that would be lying. Yes, I was actually looking forward to it, I apologize.

But Admiral Louise’s glare was too painful for me to confess that! What a dilemma! What should I do?

“Um, no, you see... I-I would like to call a friend!”

This question was too difficult for me to answer by myself!

However, Admiral Louise shook her head.

“Fufufu, call a friend you say? Do you really think you will be given that chance for every situation in life?”

T-Terrifying!

Have I ever seen Admiral Louise this angry before?

However, Sergeant Aroha didn't appear to be affected at all, because she started to rub her cheeks against the angry Admiral Louise.

"Awww! Our cute Louise! You're so adorable!"

"Let go of me."

"Come on, don't be like that..."

There was an uneasy mental war going on between Sergeant Aroha and Admiral Louise. Hmm, nothing happened physically, but I feel like I can make out a plasma storm between the two. It's tactical retreat time for me.

I tip-toed away from the two and quietly dove into the water near a mangrove tree's roots, without being noticed.



"Whew!"

Wearing a snorkel on her head, Ensign Meihowa resurfaced from the water. She turned to look at me while smiling.

"It is so much fun under the water. There are so many species of aquatic life, I wonder if it's because this is a planet abundant in nature."

"Hmm, really?"

I cheered up seeing her smile. Actually, now was not the time to be smiling giddily like this, since we were stuck in the middle of a battlefield.

However, people were not accustomed to being on the edge for extended periods of time. So it was refreshing to take a break like this rather than go mad from being on the edge. Even I felt happy for no reason.

"But to think you could set up the quarters that quickly. I'm impressed, Greenie. You have earned my respect."

"Then I wonder when that 'Greenie' nickname will wear off."

“Fufufu, so you were concerned about it after all?”

“How could I not, Ensign?”

I sighed and turned around. Then Ensign Meihowa started to panic.

“Are you angry? S-Sorry, I didn’t mean to get you angry.”

“No, I’m not angry, but...”

“Hmm, calling you a Greenie has become a bit of a habit for me. Sorry. But I’m... actually very grateful towards you.”

“No, like I said, I’m not angry, but rather...”

I wasn’t angry, I was actually checking her out sneakily by looking at her reflection on the water. I could see her approaching me, blushing slightly and looking slightly concerned. Heh heh, maybe I should surprise her when she gets a little bit closer.

As I harboured those thoughts, she pushed my back out of the blue.

Whoa! The hell?

I jumped around in surprise and saw her a fair distance away from me, because of the rebound. She had her back turned to me, pretending not to notice and she was bright red around her ears.

And why was there a beach ball causing ripples between us? You’re telling me she was that far away after pushing me away from that? It’s not like it’s a grenade, right?

“Hi~! Could you guys pass the ball to us?”

Sergeant Aroha smiled brightly and waved to us as she walked across a bridge that was made from entangled mangrove-roots. Admiral Louise was following closely after her but... huh? She appeared to be in a better mood now.

I wonder what kind of magic Sergeant Aroha performed.

“I-It’s not like I was playing around with Lezirth!”

"Yes, yes, we understand. So let's play together now."

Sergeant Aroha smiled from ear to ear as she walked into the water. I could hear some male soldiers complaining somewhere.

Those soldiers also suggested to Ensign Meihowa to play with them, but she shot them down, saying she wanted to study the ecology, and kept on diving. They were all worn out from all that diving, since it was difficult for humans to dive for extended periods of time, without proper diving equipment.

"It seems like the soldiers are all worn out from trying to keep up with you, Ensign."

"Really? I didn't notice."

"You really have the stamina, don't you. How many men did you leave gasping for breath, Ensign?"

"... Why you!"

Ensign Meihowa blushed after hearing Sergeant Aroha. She raised her voice and threw the beach ball, but instead of hitting Sergeant Aroha it hit me on the head, and then rebounded towards Admiral Louise.

"What are you doing, Ensign!"

"I-I just..."

"Why did you hit Lezirth!?"

Admiral Louise became angry in my place and jumped into the water with the beach ball in her hand.

And we began to throw the ball at each other...

Oh yes, so that's how we're in this situation.

Hmm.

It was enjoyable.



I headed towards the water tank after leaving the water. The water tank, or the practice shell to be exact, was also being used for the showers by attaching a pump and a water pipe to it. We had to shower frequently because of the mineral-rich water and the heat that made us sweat 2 litres an hour.

Pencolt and Charlie Squad male members shot daggers at me as they came out of the showers. They could really kill with their glares alone.

I thought we reconciled? Why were they like that?

“You traitor!”

Pencolt yelled at me as soon as he saw me. Huh? What did I do?

The Charlie squad leader wordlessly grabbed a deck of cards and began to play with his mates. They did not go diving with Ensign Meihowa and retired to their quarters early on and were busying themselves with gambling.

Someone of them were watching TV via the military computer. Although the Ensign was able to block off the military hyperspace channels, she was not able to restrict them on viewing commercial hyperspace TV channels.

The news channel was heavily focusing on the events of the Azoran system. And to my surprise, they were broadcasting about the fact that there were survivors in the Azoran system.

The thought of the enemy using the information to track us down crossed my mind, but that was quickly proved to be wrong.

“The Elcro-Asa-Replicant Alliance is currently holding the soldiers and the miners stationed on Azoran-3 hostage.”

Visuals switched to the Federation soldiers and miners from the 1st and 2nd Mine bases being locked up inside cells. Surprisingly, I caught a glimpse of Commander Donna’s face. The one who recorded the video seemed to be a soldier from the Alliance.

[These Federation hostages will only be set free when the Azoran Solar System is liberated and the entire Federation force withdraws from the system, as well as the freedom of 2000 political prisoners.]

The Federation never agreed to hostage exchanges. This was a tradition that traced back to the days of the old Earth governments. The only solution to hostages was to rescue them.

“There’s no mention of us.”

“Well isn’t that because the enemy will try to look for us if they become aware of our existence?”

Some soldiers muttered that among themselves while watching the broadcast.

Yes, that was obvious. However, I felt a sense of unease building inside me while watching the news.



“Lezirth.”

I heard Sergeant Aroha calling me. When I exited the cool, air-conditioned quarters, a blast of hot air embraced me.

However, I couldn’t feel the heat’s intensity all that much. That was because Sergeant Aroha was beckoning me with only a single towel covering her body.

“Come this way.”

“No, but I...”

“Quick! I’m embarrassed as well.”

She lowered her head. Although I couldn’t see her expression very well, I could tell her pointy ears were blushing. Eh... what could she want?

“Ah, OK. I don’t know what you want though.”

I, Lezirth Dawnbringer, the Commander of Dawn Corps, cannot allow a lady to be embarrassed.

I followed Sergeant Aroha as she led me to the officers’ quarters.

I walked into the makeshift quarters tent first, but there wasn't anyone inside. There were just 3 camping beds set up. The tent itself was the same size as the soldiers' tents, so it felt spacious compared to ours, due of the lack of beds.

"Hmm, no-one's inside?"

"Lezirth, could you sit down on the bed first?"

"Eh?"

I turned around in surprise. Sergeant Aroha came closer to me while blushing. She was so close that her chest was touching mine. I could feel her tender breasts behind that single towel layer.

"N-No... that's!"

I backed away from her in panic and tumbled onto the bed, after tripping over the bed legs. Then she slowly approached me and lifted away the hand that was holding the towel in place.

"I don't do this to anyone, even if I have Asa blood running through me. Trust me on that at least."

"No wait! Sergeant! S-Stop it! If you do something that cannot be undone..."

But it was too late. As soon as her hand let go of the towel, it slid off her slender body and dropped onto the floor.

And underneath was the reddish-brown bikini swimsuit that she was wearing before.

'Damn it!'

Huh? N-No, that was just out of reflex. I wasn't disappointed or anything.

Sergeant Aroha sneakily smiled and came closer.

"Pfft. Hahaha, sorry. Were you expecting something?"

"..."

I wore an exasperated expression. This woman, damn it. Shouldn't I sue her for sexual harassment or something?

As I thought about those possibilities, the tent door opened and Admiral Louise and Ensign Meihowa walked in, flushed bright red. They cleared their throats and pretended to look elsewhere.

The two girls took out a note each and handed it to Sergeant Aroha.

“What! Louise! I believed in you! Were you betting on me?!”

“Ah, s-sorry Lezirth. I was caught up in the moment. I’m sorry.”

Admiral Louise’s face was as red as a well ripened tomato. The sight of the brown-haired girl being embarrassed and apologizing sincerely was so cute.

And she was still dressed in the same 3-piece swimsuit that she wore before. Every time she moved, water droplets ran down her thighs and dropped onto the floor.

However, that didn’t mean that I wouldn’t get angry just because she was cute. Damn it... you let me down, Admiral Louise. I trusted you!

Sergeant Aroha laughed and sneakily brought her face closer to mine and whispered into my ear.

“Sorry Lezirth, but we weren’t doing it out of fun. We just did this so that we could fix a little argument they had before.”

“Eh?”

“And since there are people watching us... we’ll do it next time when we’re by ourselves... okay?”

Saying that, she snickered and distanced herself.

Damn it! They’re making a fool out of me! T-That was how I should be reacting, but I was grinning from ear to ear. Curses! This woman was too skilled at playing with other people!

“Gee, you’re so cute, Lezirth. Heh heh.”

And she winked at me.

Although I did not understand the whole situation, it sounded like I was teased to resolve a little argument that Ensign Meihowa and Admiral Louise had.

‘As if something like that is okay!’

I was angry that they had an argument! No, I should be angry, but.... *Ha... haa.* My heart was beating furiously. What did this woman just do to me?

“Hmm. S-Sorry about that, Lezirth. It was our fault.”

Ensign Meihowa spoke with her arms crossed and without even facing me. Pulling off the tri-coloured racing swimsuit well with her model-like proportions... her chest looked a lot larger when she had her arms crossed like that.

Although she wasn’t usually as large as Aroha, when she had her arms crossed like that... hmm, I’m worried the swimsuit might burst.

Ah... I should be telling them off, but I couldn’t help but to notice them. Ensign Meihowa’s breasts and her smooth legs... and that zone where her two legs met, slightly covered by the swimsuit....

It’s somewhere that would be impossible to see in a normal situation, but I could look as much as I wanted because she was averting my gaze.

No, what do I mean, ‘look as much as I want’? Come on! You mustn’t fall to the dark side, Lezirth Dawnbringer! I straightened up myself.

After continuously averting my gaze, Ensign Meihowa bowed her head in surrender. With a teary-eyed expression, she held my hand with both of her hands.

“Sorry... I’m really sorry. Apprentice Lezirth, can you accept my apology?”

“Are you sincerely sorry?”

I glanced at Ensign Meihowa and she nodded her head.

“Of course!”

“Then I will forgive you, on a condition!”

“Huh? W-What is it?”

“Can I touch your wings for a bit?”

“Eh?”

Those wings have been bothering me for a while—what do they do when she sleeps? If they were anything like bird wings, then they might fracture easily, but that doesn’t seem to happen. And she sat down fine on chairs and rested on her back seemingly without any discomfort. I wanted to know how they functioned.

So that was why I asked, but Ensign Meihowa was being so embarrassed.

“Ah... t-that’s a bit...”

“Eh? Is that how it is? I see. So you’re sorry, but not sorry enough to let me do that? Then again, I suppose it would be rude for an Apprentice to talk like this to the almighty Ensign, right?”

She looked like she was about to burst into tears, but she must’ve worked up her resolve, because she bit down on her lower lip.

“Whew! It can’t be helped. Fine, you may touch them. But! Not just now.”

Did she hate it that much? Or maybe she didn’t like people seeing them? But that won’t stop me from still touching them because I was angry. I will touch them even if she begs me not to! I’m going to fully study every nook and corners of your Elcro wings! Keh heh heh, uhahahahahaha!

I laughed like an evil villain inside my heart.

“Hmm, anyhow, the reason why I called you here is not to tease you.”

Admiral Louise turned on the terminal on the computer. A hologram visual popped up.

“We have not relayed this order to the soldiers just yet thanks to Ensign Meihowa’s assistance.”

“Oh, finally.”

“But the order is a bit...”

Smartly dressed in a green suit, a middle-aged Mongolian Earthling, whose hair was greying here and there, was sitting down at a table. A star on both sides of his shoulder indicated his rank as a Commodore.

He was a low-ranking junior compared to a three-starred Vice-Admiral like myself, but the one giving the order was surprisingly high considering that we were only an incomplete platoon at the moment. What was going on?

[My name is Commodore Dae-Sik Park of the 2nd Space Marines, Commander of the Ursa Major Brigade.]

Although the Ursa Major Brigade did not exist while I was an officer, I could guess what kind of brigade it was.

One of the 8 Kishins of the Federation: Ursa Major.

This man must be the pilot of the Ursa Major, also nicknamed the Emperor.

Hmm, Ursa Major the Violet Emperor, huh. The Ursa Major certainly could put up a good fight against Diablo the Black Tyrant, or even beat him.

Even if the Alliance had the Kishin Diablo, the Federation also had Kishin-class Alter-Armours as well as experienced pilots. Hence, that gave the Federation the upper hand when a fight between two Kishin-class Alter-Armours broke out.

Also, the Ursa Major was a mid-ranged Alter-Armour, so it held the advantage over the close-ranged Diablo. The Federation had the upper hand in all aspects.

‘But that’s assuming the Tetragrammaton does not interfere. But victory should be certain if a Kishin-based brigade enters the fight.’

Although I did not know how capable the pilots for Diablo and Ursa Major are, this assumption is still correct even if the Diablo pilot was slightly stronger. As long as the Tetragrammaton does not launch an attack as soon as the Ursa Major Brigade enters the Azoran system, the victory was certain.

Then suddenly, Commodore Dae-Sik Park smiled—a sinister one at that. Although I didn’t notice because he was wearing a poker face till now, his smile instantly made him look like a villain from some action movie.

He spoke while stroking his beard.

[I understand that the Kishin Diablo is currently on Azoran-3. But you see, my daughter became a heroine in her school play. So I cannot possibly take the Ursal Major there, so I will be sending 4 Master-Class Alter-Armours accompanied by the Air Force and the Navy.]

Eh? What did he just say?

I thought I was watching some comedy movie for a moment. He just gave out his orders based around his personal life, and he calls himself a Commodore? Are you kidding me?

[And the ones we must rescue are the Federation soldiers and the miners being held hostage at the mining base. You will stay hidden on Azoran-3 and distract the enemy on foot, nine hours from now: at 1200 Standard Federation Time. The meeting point and the mission details will be available on your military computer terminals.]

“...”

I could feel my anger raging inside me. This was another suicidal mission! The same thing happened with Commander Donna before, but how can a Commodore give a mission like this. Ordering an injured platoon to suicidally distract the enemy in an Alter-Armour infested area.

But wait, we’re not even the ones being rescued? He’s ordering us to distract the enemy for the others to escape?

“Damn it! How is someone like him a Commodore! People are risking their lives here, and what did he say? His daughter’s school play is more important? How rotten is the Federation if someone as brainless as him is a Commodore? And he’s not even going to bring the Kishin here when he knows the enemy has one!”

Sure, Master-class Alter-Armours were powerful, but they were two ranks below a Kishin-class. Victory against the Diablo even with four of them was uncertain.

“The problem is, this is a formal order.”

Ensign Meihowa spoke with a depressed expression.

Wait, so this bastard just gave the orders while talking about his daughter’s play as a formal order?

“The Federation has really lowered their standards.”

“Yes, I agree.”

Admiral Louise agreed to my remark.

“And I found this out by hacking, but... the Tetragrammaton started moving again about an hour ago. It seems like it attacked the Oden Solar System with the Punishing Wail, but the damage was not as severe as the last time.”

50 hours had passed since the last attack by the Tetragrammaton.

Tetragrammaton’s Punishing Wail attack was a powerful one, but that power itself came at a great cost of cooldown time.

Admiral Louise needed 36 hours between each Punishing Wail.

Then we can assume that the enemy pilot required 50 hours of recharging to use the attack again, because they could not possibly have a pilot as great as Admiral Louise.

“But I did not realize how severe the issue was. The Federation has really decided to kill us. Do they hate us Replicants this much?”

Admiral Louise wore a worried expression. However, Sergeant Aroha shook her head.

“No, it’s not just Replicants. They hate anyone with even a drop of Asa or Elcro blood. Oh, what a tragedy~ our platoon has only those types of people?! Ah, what a coincidence! Damn it!”

And Sergeant Aroha tried in vain to lift up our moods with those sarcastic remarks.

09. Operation Exorcism

The Space Federation was a city state. As a state created by the union of citizens, the deaths of citizens were taken very seriously.

So even during a war, the Space Federation was very cautious about killing people needlessly. If a soldier was being held hostage in the middle of a battlefield, that soldier must be rescued, even if that meant sending hundreds of thousands of men to do the job. Although the efficiency of such methods was terrible on paper, that was one of the fundamental beliefs of the Federation, as well as its strength.

People would entrust their lives to the Federation only if the Federation valued every individual highly. However, Replicants and mixed-blood people were excluded from such beliefs.

They weren't formally excluded on paper, of course. However, the pure-blood ideology was prominent in the majority of society, and thus they were disregarded from the Federation's beliefs.

We decided to lodge a serious complaint about the mission for now.

If an Ensign lodged a complaint about a mission given by a Commodore, the Ensign would never be promoted. Ensigns could always take the issue to court, but human society was not so kind.

Making a complaint to Commodore Dae-Sik Park was meaningless for Ensign Meihowa. The mission will not change, and Ensign Meihowa will get on Commodore Park's bad side and he will surely make her military life harder for her.

Although that was assuming that we come out of the mission alive, the fact of the matter was that a complaint was useless.

"But we must lodge one."

Ensign Meihowa made up her mind and requested a change in the mission. Her requested change was for the main force to launch an attack as soon as they arrive to the Azoran system, hitting the Elcro Alter-Armors while our platoon launches an attack on the mining base.

The alteration was only a slight one, so it shouldn't cause big divergence from the original plan. However, this slight change could increase the 'bomb' platoon's chances of survival from slim to tremendous.

Us attacking first will aggravate the enemy to launch a full attack on us, and we will lose our lives. That was why we asked them to reconsider the mission plan.

If the Federation was indeed a city-state that valued the lives of us bomb platoons, Ensign Meihowa's appeal for a change in the mission parameters would be accepted.

However, the Federation wasn't like that, as expected.

Ensign Meihowa's appeal was shot down and they only replied, saying 'focus on your given mission'.

And so, Ensign Meihowa and Sergeant Aroha unwillingly gave a short mission briefing to the soldiers. And they showed their outraged responses.

"A-Are they crazy!"

"They're telling us all to die?!"

"Damn it! I'm still injured!"

The soldiers broke out into fits and cursing. The leader of the Charlie squad represented his squad and voiced their suggestion.

"Why don't we just hide out on Azoran-3 and surrender to the Elcros when they win? They are an Elcro-Asa-Replicant Alliance and our platoon also consists of Replicants, Asa and Elcro. Shouldn't the Alliance receive us?"

"And if the Elcro lose?"

"Then we surrender to the Federation and serve our sentences from the military courts. All they'll sentence us with is a few months of community service and jail time at the detention centre!"

"Yeah, yeah!"

All of the soldiers nodded their heads.

Their suggestion was a logical one, given their condition. Even I had nothing to say to persuade them otherwise. This Federation was not one worth risking their lives for.

However, my only issue was the concern at what the Alliance might do if we surrender to them. What will they do with me? Will they lock me up in jail? If I stay in jail, I won't be able to know what happened over the last 120 years, and won't I rot and die in jail?

And the Alliance was suspicious.

The only source of my suspicion was what Admiral Louise had said, but there was a dark secret that the Alliance was also hiding.

"Now then, listen to what I am about to say. If you decide to pull out from the mission after you hear what I say, I will not stop you."

Ensign Meihowa began to talk and she looked at me.

This was a plan that Admiral Louise, Ensign Meihowa, Sergeant Aroha and I racked our brains to come up with. How could we avoid being court martialed and still be rescued? That was the goal of this plan.

Every mission plan that came out from this platoon was a life threatening and survival-based one. I used to come up with plans for victory when I was a Vice Admiral, not some small, petty plans like for these low rank operations.



It was now two hours before the start of the mission given from the Ursa Major Brigade, Operation Exorcism.

They must've named the mission as Exorcism because they mean to 'exorcise' the devil (Diablo). Why were they so certain that they'll be able to take down Diablo the Black Tyrant without even sending a Kishin?

When I asked Pencolt about this, he told me that the Federation had the tendency of looking down on Asa and Elcro Kishin Pilots, because they defeated the Asa

Kishins Psychoa and Minerva 8 times, and Elcro Kishins Arc-razor and Ginnungagap 16 times.

The only reason why the Elcro and Asa Kishins were still functioning after being defeated so many times was because Kishins could travel through hyperspace on their own.

Since Kishins could traverse hyperspace independently, Kishins were able to retreat from attacks and recover from its damages before going onto the battlefields again. And even now, in the year 189 SY (Space Years), there was no way of instantly defeating a Kishin.

Kishin survival skills aside, they lost that many times by ordinary methods? Then they can certainly be looked down upon.

“By the way, why did they name the Kishins after human names like Minerva or Ginnungagap?”

I studied the area while seated on the Spider and asked Pencolt who was sitting next to me.

“Ah, they say they named them because that was what the humans codenamed them as, man. You know how the Fed had 8 Kishins... and the Kishin count jumped to 12 after the Asa and Elcro discovered 2 each? Asas and Elcros thought humans were more knowledgeable about Kishins and took on those codenames as the Kishins’ true names, man.”

“What, you mean they only got the Kishins after the humans came in contact with them? They didn’t have them before the contact?”

The Human-Race only got ahold of the Kishins after they discovered the ‘Old One’ on Mars.

And from the Old One, humans took its cells and mastered hyperspace travel from that, and also created the Alter-Armours.

The 8 Alter-Armours in strong communion with the Old One were labelled as Kishins. When the 8 Kishins were created, the Old One shrivelled up and ceased to exist.

Humans continued their efforts to create more Kishins by using the cells from the 8 Great Kishins, but only normal Alter-Armours could be produced through their efforts—Kishin creation was impossible without the Old One.

Then suddenly, four Kishins appeared. And the two races that were at war with the Human-Race discovered two each?

I thought that the two races harvested their Kishins from a different Letix Überlord when I heard about this before.

If they did indeed harvest Kishins through their own efforts, they would've named the Kishins after their own background. If they thought that the human names were the true names...

“If Asas and Elcros possessed Kishins beforehand, they would've named the Kishins after their own mythology and would not have assumed that the human codenames were their true names. They really must've obtained the Kishins after the contact with humans.”

Admiral Louise spoke after listening to our conversation.

“Then... someone gave them the Kishins to prolong this war?”

A cold chill ran down my back.

The Human-Race has been attempting Kishin production for the last 189 years in vain. And that was what led people to believe that Kishins were a coincidental product from Letixes.

But someone actually created Kishins artificially? And an existence like that was overseeing this war? Although this was only an assumption based on no solid evidence, the very thought of it was terrifying.

“Someone who could grant Kishins?”

“Hmm, there’s no way someone like that could exist, right?”

Admiral Louise laughed weakly at what she said. I also followed suit and laughed along with her, but I felt like a hole was blown through my chest.

Putting the question of possibility aside, let's assume that someone wants to prolong this war. If that was the case, then maybe that person is the mastermind behind the recent Elcro, Asa and Replicant Alliance. At this rate, the Elcros and Asas were going to be conquered by the Human Race.

'N-No way. I can't let my imagination run wild now, can I?'

I shook my head.

"We have reached Point Bravo! We should set up the turrets!"

We jumped out of the Spider and set up the turrets at the planned point.

The ones that we were setting up were called Centri-guns, which were made up of four connected Colion Rifles, and could be used as both anti-aircraft and machine guns. They could be operated wirelessly but also could be operated on automatic, because they were equipped with AI CPU units.

I connected the wires and installed more than 8 Colion Rifles in the formation. They were all aimed at the mining base. I had them targeting predicted points that the enemy might move towards, when they start looking for the Centri-guns.

The plan was like this.

We set up the Centri-guns in various places where they would go undetected by the enemy. And when it was time for the operation to commence, the Centri-guns will spring to life wirelessly and confuse the enemy.

Although we did not expect the set-up to cause any serious damage to the enemy Alter-Armours, we would still be accomplishing the mission given to us.

The only problem was that if our platoon stays too far from the mining base... there is the possibility of the main force abandoning us and leaving ahead.

The mission directive mentioned that our platoon will be rescued only if we are in the proximity, and we might be abandoned if we are far away.

Hence, we had to approach the mining base with a do-or-die attitude.

There was a high risk of us being attacked even while the enemy is distracted by the Centri-gun attacks. Just like that incident that Bravo Squad experienced, a single squad can be wiped out in seconds if discovered.

The only difference between that time and now was that we had Ensign Meihowa's Alter-Armour with us. Even so, her Alter-Armour was a Minion-class, the lowest rank.

Taking it into the battlefield might attract unwanted attention from the enemy, but Ensign Meihowa could be rebuked for abandoning an important piece of military equipment to save her life. So we also had to find a way for Ensign Meihowa to save face.

Although dangerous, we arranged to have her Alter-Armour secretly transported near the mining base, by taking advantage of the sea and jungle terrain. Afterwards, Meihowa must ride on the quad bike and regroup with us by taking the jungle trails.

We planned to have the Alter-Armour close to the pick-up point, just in case it had to be recovered. In which case I would have to collect it by teleporting.

"Great! Point Bravo setup complete!"

"Point Charlie also complete!"

"Point Delta as well!"

Centri-gun setup was complete in minutes. I was worried because we were so close to the mining base, but the enemy soldiers patrolling the area appeared to be quite lax about their job.

Azoran-3 was really hot. It was so hot that all soldiers were moving sluggishly.

"Whew, it's like I'm taking a shower with my own sweat."

I brought a water bottle closer to my lips, drank down the contents, and hopped back onto the Spider. Sergeant Aroha, who was operating the armoured vehicle, mischievously smiled.

"It's cool in here thanks to the air-conditioning. Wanna come in?"

“...”

The two of us in that one-seater? I could feel myself blushing. Geez, this lady is really unrestrained.

Then Pencolt suddenly put his hand up.

“I, Apprentice Pencolt, would gladly come in!”

“Ah, really?”

Sergeant Aroha opened the Spider’s door and walked out. And she willingly allowed Pencolt to take the air-conditioned operator’s seat of the armoured vehicle.

“Just don’t touch anything. I’ve locked down all controls, so nothing will happen even if you bump into something, though.”

And she sat next to me. I looked at her in surprise.

“Eh?”

“And why don’t we work up a sweat together, just the two of us. Pass me the water.”

“Geez... Sergeant. Why would you leave the cool place and come out?”

I passed the water bottle to her. Admiral Louise also climbed up to us. Although it was a two-seater, it did not feel cramped because of her slim figure.

“Me too!”

“Wait, it’s hot Louise!”

“I’m also going to be here.”

Sergeant Aroha pushed her away, saying that it was hot, but Admiral Louise demanded to have her way and sat right next to me.

Hmm, why are they like this? We were all uncontrollably drenched in sweat, even though the combat uniforms had some cooling functionality. The situation was worsened because we were sticking far too closely to each other.

Even so, neither Admiral Louise nor Sergeant Aroha chose to put some distance between us. I was caught up in a test of endurance myself, being sandwiched on either side of me by the girls.

—Whirrr.

The Spider's electronic motors sprang to life and wobbled as it made its way through the jungle. The movements caused Admiral Louise to lean towards me and she eventually fell onto my chest.

I hugged the sweat drenched girl's body gently. It felt like we were hugging each other while naked because of the damp clothes.

'Ugh.'

T-This isn't good. This feeling is...

"Hey, what are you doing, Lezirth!"

And when Aroha pushed me, I could feel two fleshy mounds on my back.

—Whirrr!

Every time the Spider wobbled, that type of contact continued to occur.

"*Sniff...*It's cold here. But it's so sad, man."

I could hear Apprentice Pencolt's grumbles behind my back.



Ensign Meihowa, gasping for breath, finally regrouped with us in the jungle after arriving here by quad bike half an hour before the mission.

She pulled out the Thorium battery from the bike, folded it up, and returned it to the storage area on a leg of the Spider.

“Ah, I should’ve helped you.”

I tried to stand as I said that. However, it was easier said than done because Sergeant Aroha and Admiral Louise were clinging onto me.

“What are you doing?”

Ensign Meihowa climbed onto the Spider via the ladder by its side while drinking some water.

“Um, you see...”

So how should I explain this situation?

Well suddenly, Sergeant Aroha looked at all the sweat she was sweating and licked herself, only to complain that it wasn’t salty at all and she licked some salt from a packet.

I also tasted a bit of my sweat, but it was close to plain more than anything. And suddenly Admiral Louise placed her hand on my cheek and licked it!

“It’s really not salty.”

Then Sergeant Aroha said she didn’t know if her sweat got any saltier and asked me to lick her sweat between her breasts. Sure, there were sweat drops there... b-but how?!

How am I supposed to lick there?

“Come now, stick your tongue out. OK? Now, come here! Don’t run away from me, Lezirth!”

Sergeant Aroha’s glare became terrifying!

When I began to panic, Admiral Louise looked at her own chest. However, she was nothing but a young girl in that regard compared to the impressive, dynamic Sergeant Aroha. Although she was already feminine enough, Admiral Louise appeared to be somewhat unhappy.

Sergeant Aroha looked at her, smiled and delivered the final blow.

"That area stays dry and not very sweaty for you, right Louise? How lucky for you, it's nice and ventilated."

And after that blow, things became chaotic.

Weren't they roommates? Weren't they on friendly terms with each other? And Admiral Louise has always been the quiet and graceful type. Who is this Admiral Louise that is before my eyes right now?

Oh my god. Women are so scary!

They're a thousand times scarier than Letix Predators, Brain Suckers and Demolishers!

....

And something like that happened.

But how should I explain this?

I quickly glanced at Ensign Meihowa who was looking at me with an innocent expression. She was waiting for my response.

Her slightly sweaty, transparent-like silver hair, her emerald eyes that were as clear as the Caribbean Sea were staring right at me, with her hands resting on her waist.

Although she was wearing a military uniform, she was like a model straight from a fashion magazine. And her eyes... ah, I couldn't lie to those pure eyes—I would be human trash if I told a lie to her.

"Nothing happened."

...

That's the only explanation I could give right now.

I did not lie. In a way.

Ensign Meihowa looked at me, Louise and Aroha in that order. And at that moment, we could all hear Pencolt muttering from inside the Spider.

"Even I could've tasted it to see if it was salty or not, man."

"Huh?"

"I could've licked her as well."

"Lick who?"

Ensign Meihowa looked at him in curiosity.

◊ ◊ ◊

Five minutes before the mission, a message came from the higher-ups.

[This is the First Battalion of the Ursa Major Brigade: we have arrived on the fifth orbit of Azoran-3. Fourth Platoon of the Second Military School, please respond!]

Ah, so our official name was the Fourth Platoon. I didn't even know, because everyone referred to our platoon as the bomb platoon or the suicide platoon.

[Fourth Platoon is on standby, sir. Over.]

Ensign Meihowa calmly replied to the message.

[The First Battalion will commence the operation at the set time, as planned. We expect you to fulfill your part. Over.]

[Copy that.]

After ending the communication, Ensign Meihowa began to do some breathing exercises. Sergeant Aroha returned back into the Spider; Pencolt, Louise and I were seated on top of the Spider, as assigned. The other soldiers were awaiting orders while riding on quad bikes and military vehicles below us.

The atmosphere was tense, because whether it was a small or a big mission, a mission was still a mission, nonetheless.

"Will we be able to return back safe and sound?"

"Shouldn't we receive a medal if we return back alive? Don't you receive a medal if you save your hostage comrades?"

Charlie Squad and the Alpha squad (the injured Alpha and Bravo Squad members recovered and reformed the Alpha squad) were already excited about returning back alive and receiving a medal. Then again, I suppose this was much better than trembling in fear.

"But that's all assuming we make it out of this alive."

When I muttered that under my breath, Ensign Meihowa turned to look at me. Huh? What did she want?

"Ah, Lezirth?"

"Yes?"

"If we return back alive..."

She trailed off without looking at me and began to talk again.

"We might be split up when we are reassigned to different platoons, but I hope we could stay together in the same platoon. B-Because having an experienced soldier like you increases our chances of survival! That's all!"

At a loss as to what I should say, I could only scratch my cheeks absentmindedly and then I smiled and nodded my head.

"Sure, Platoon Leader. As long as you stop calling me a Greenie, that is."

Admiral Louise looked at me with soft eyes this time.

"You have to stay with me, Lezirth. You know what I mean, right?"

O-Of course, we are alone in this space 120 years in the future. We must trust in each other and be together.

When I nodded my head, Ensign Meihowa asked.

"Hold on, what does she mean?"

Suddenly, Pencolt yelled after staying quiet for all that time.

"Ah, geez, cut it out guys. Why do you keep talking about 'if we come out alive'? Don't you know the ones who die first are people who say that stuff?"

"Then I suppose you'll live forever."

I spoke without putting too much thought into it. Ensign Meihowa added to what I said from next to me.

"You'll have eternal youth."

"You might continue to live even when the universe disappears."

This time Sergeant Aroha added to the attack.

Admiral Louise gasped and covered her mouth with her hand.

Wow, how cute. It would look like its being faked if a celebrity did that action, but Admiral Louise actually seemed serious and natural.

However, what she said was not so nice.

"Then Apprentice Pencolt is actually the God of the Universe?"

At the quadruple hit, Pencolt shut his mouth.

"Sniff, sniff! Are these tears? No! I'm just sweating from my eyes, man."

The God of the Universe was crying. No, he was sweating from his eyes, like he said. And the operation time drew closer!



Centri-guns fired smart bombs at its maximum capacity. It fired smart bombs weighing 30kgs each, nearly 40km away.

The smart bombs flew in an arc towards the rows of Alter-Armours near the mining base.

The smart bombs exploded in mid-air and split into hundreds of miniature smart bombs, half of them releasing shrapnel, and the other half releasing plasma waves.

And because of the high oxygen density of Azoran-3, the shrapnel shards combusted, mid-air! The explosion and the smoke covered the Alter-Armours.

“What’s the situation like with the Centri-guns?”

“They’re all stuck in the ground from the rebound! Readjusting the angles now!”

The soldiers used the computer calculation system and readjusted the Centri-guns for the second round. Firing 30kg bombs 40km away was tremendous and the Centri-guns’ aim was messed up due to recoil.

“We will run out of bombs at this rate.”

A single soldier received 5kg of Colion ammo, and 300kg of the ammo were used on a Centri-gun.

Four individual Colion guns made up a single Centri-gun, and each Colion gun was shooting 30kgs worth with each shot. There wasn’t enough ammo to use after two shots.

We attacked with all our might, but the Alter-Armours were not greatly damaged. The unmanned drones were all unusable, but only three Alter-Armours were broken while the others were slightly damaged. Even the three broken machines were not completely broken, and could be easily repaired.

And the Alter-Armours began to attack.

That’s right. Get angry. Get angry and fly towards the Centri-guns! And the Federation forces will...

Speak of the devil, the Federation forces appeared. There were 4 Master-class, 8 Senior-class, 16 Major-class and countless other Alter-Armours. Although the Ursal Major was not present, this amount of force was not bad at all.

[Destroy everything!]

The Federation Alter-Armours flew straight down and opened fire with their Colion Rifles and missiles. Superfast plasma cannons hit the Alter-Armours and blew them to bits in an instant.

The other Alliance Alter-Armours quickly tried to respond to the attack, but the Federation had the upper hand and poured out their attacks without holding anything back.

Explosion after explosion! The sounds of Alter-Armours being torn to pieces resounded over the terminals.

Although I could not forgive the Commodore of the Ursa Major Brigade for the orders he'd given us, I had to admit that his brigade was nothing to scoff at. The brigade was almost comparable to my own Dawn Corps! If the Asa and Elcro pilots were this weak, then 4 Master-class Alter-Armours would've been sufficient.

The Federation's Alter-Armours were dominating! Making use of the distraction and the attack, the Federation forces also rained down shells and sent swarms of soldiers.

"Operation Phase 2! We're also charging in!"

Ensign Meihowa clenched her lips and gave out her orders. Soldiers from the Fourth Platoon of the Second Military School all jumped out from the jungle and charged towards the mining base.

We could only be saved if we moved with the Federation. We all knew that, and that was why we charged dutifully.

"Something is not right! Everyone stop!"

Admiral Louise noticed the unusual situation first and I understood her instantly. However, the other soldiers, as well as the soldiers of the Ursa Major Brigade didn't seem to notice.

There was no resistance from the mining base!

There was not a single Alliance soldier in sight at the mining base. The only ones present were the Federation hostages! Did the Alliance plant explosives to wipe us all out?

"... Doesn't look like it."

The marines of the Ursa Major Brigade stormed into the mining base and rescued the hostages. There didn't seem to be any traps or any surprise attacks.

The Alliance forces were quickly wiped out in the surrounding areas. They were no match to the Alter-Armours and the jet fighters.

The situation would've become unfavourable for us if the Alliance planted a few infantrymen in the base. The Elcros would've known about that, but why did they choose to leave the mining base empty?

Suddenly, a buzz sound could be heard from the sky

And black lightning fell from out of nowhere!

That was the only way to describe the object that flew down with frightening speed before the Ursa Major Brigade Alter-Armours!

The black Alter-Armour, Kishin Diablo, had revealed itself with its cape fluttering behind his back.

[Haha! So you finally appeared, you foolish people!]

[Destroy the cockpit and secure the Diablo! You'll get a promotion if you do!]

The Ursa Major Brigade members were actually overjoyed at the sight of the Kishin. They were certain of their victory, even against a Kishin, and they had the leisure to even think about only damaging the cockpit. The Elcro pilot must be that bad.

'Then what about the Replicants? Replicants should be at a decent level since they were part of the Federation force before. Oh, that's right, the Replicants had the Omertà as their Kishin.'

Omertà the Shadow King.

It was a Kishin that excelled in assassinations, so it was very useful when used as a support or in a one-on-one situation, but it found it difficult to fight at its full power without any support.

Hence, while it was a powerful Kishin when used by the Federation, it was not very threatening when used by the Rebels.

But even so, the Federation soldiers were looking down on the pilot way too much. They'll taste defeat like that.

[But hold on, aren't our lives at stake here?!]

[A single blow from the Diablo can kill us all!]

The infantrymen around the base all looked in fear. However, the Diablo paid no attention to the hostages running away as it hovered in mid-air. How strange.

"Is he saying that he won't kill anyone even in a situation like this?"

There were civilian miners mixed in with the hostages at the mines.

If the Alliance really wanted to anger the Federation, they would have tortured or injured these civilians a long time ago. But seeing as they did not do so, it seemed like the Alliance leaders disliked civilian deaths.

Or maybe it meant their lives were of no use to the Kishin Diablo—whether they're alive or not.

The pilot was being arrogant in a way, but at the same time he was not. It was too early for me to tell.

Well, I should be glad about it either way though.

Now, I wonder what he's like as a pilot.



The Diablo and the four Master-class Alter-Armours of the Ursa Major Brigade were staring at each other.

We will take down the Kishin with four Master-class Alter-Armours.

That was what the Commodore claimed.

Did those four pilots have what it takes to take down a Kishin?

And how much of the Diablo's strength could the pilot use?

The answer to those questions would be answered shortly.

The ones who made the first move were the Master quartet. They put some distance between them and the Diablo. Diablo was a close-range type, and while the Brigade's Alter-Armours were all-purpose, they chose to rely on their mid-ranged attacks.

As the Alter-Armours tried to distance themselves, the Diablo shot lasers from its horn. The laser, consisting of pure plasma, was aimed straight at the Master-class Alter-Armours.

However, all four of the Alter-Armours turned translucent with a rainbow-tint. The laser passed right through them and disappeared into thin air.

—Phase Shift!

It was the skill that made the user sit half in hyperspace and made them immune to all physical damage for a short moment. I could tell that the Federation pilots were at a proficient level, with their ability to Phase Shift while flying at high speeds.

[Fire!]

This time, the four Federation Armours fired their Colion Rifles. The rifles were attached to their outer gauntlets so that their hands were free even while shooting.

Living up to his title of a tyrant, Kishin Diablo arrogantly stood in the way of those attacks with its arms crossed. A black curtain appeared out of nowhere and shielded the Kishin from the Colion Rifle attacks.

The difference between the Alter-Armour specs was huge; blocking the Alter-Armour class Colion-Rifle attacks with such ease.

However, the Master-class pilots did not fret and commenced their next attack.

While continuing to fire the rifles, something started to leak out from their outer armour: green light. Those green lights gathered at the Alter-Armours' hands and shot beams at the Diablo.

Diablo fluttered its cape half-heartedly and made itself translucent. It was trying to avoid the attacks by Phase Shifting like before. However, Diablo's body shook with sounds of explosion.

"That idiot!"

I clicked my tongue while looking at the fight. The attack that the Master quartet did was called a Phase Shift Attack and the attack itself was Phase Shifted. The attack would miss the target if it did not attempt a Phase Shift and it would hit the target if it did attempt a Phase Shift.

The attack was modified from an attack that was originally invented to attack thick armoured vehicles. The quartet used the attack to hit the Kishin because the Kishin's defence was comparable to thick armour and the Diablo was obviously hit because its pilot attempted a Phase Shift.

"Huh?"

But its reaction was sluggish.

The Diablo's pilot did not plan on being hit by that Phase Shift Attack; he was just surprised at the unexpected hits.

"What?"

And furthermore, there were fluorescent plasma specks on Diablo's body. The Diablo tried to take them off, but they wouldn't budge.

"What a fool."

I couldn't help but to click my tongue.

[Connecting Pegasus Shot on stand-by!]

All four Master-classes displayed the same movements. They held up their right hand above their heads, as if they were about to deliver a finishing blow. And light started to gather at their hands.

[Connecting Pegasus Shot! Commence!]

All four machines executed the same move at the same time with a shout in unison.

Connecting Pegasus Shot was one of Ursa Major's attacks, and it was a homing-type that shot towards those green plasma specks that were plastered over the Diablo. I've seen the Ursa Major use it before in the past, but to think that those Master-class Alter-Armours could use it. I'm impressed.

[Hiyaaaaa!]

The Master quartet activated the Connecting Pegasus Shot with a battle cry. The ball of light in their hands split into tens of rays that sprayed out.

The shots were neither fast nor slow, but they all flew towards Diablo. All four Alter-Armours bombarding the Kishin with Connecting Pegasus Shot dyed the sky with blinding light.

The Diablo began to panic, seeing all those rays of light shooting towards the green plasma on its body.

But suddenly, a red flash shone from Diablo's eyes.

[Everyone prepare for a shockwave!]

I panicked at the flash and warned everyone via the terminal.

Diablo the Black Tyrant was about to use its Kishin Arts! Diablo's apprehensions rang loud and clear via strong telepathy.

—Kishin Arts: Infernal Stinger!

I wrapped Admiral Louise with my arms and warned everyone to brace themselves for the attack.

At that moment, Diablo began to spin in mid-air and prepared to kick in a whip-like motion.

Although the Kishin appeared to have machine-like movements, it was very agile and its upper body and its cape started to twist before delivering the kick.

Suddenly, it kicked and the kick ripped through air, space and everything in its way.

Shuuuuuuu!

A red-black hyperspace began to form around the centre of that spinning kick and started to suck in everything in its path. And shockwave after shockwave swept the land.

Azoran-3's atmosphere became compressed by the shockwaves and air started to become ionized. Fireballs fell from the sky and burned as the planet turned hellish.

The shockwave shot right through the atmosphere and into outer space. A mushroom cloud, similar to an atomic bomb, began to rise.

Small bikes were blown away while the vehicles were flipped over. However, everyone was prepared for the shockwaves because of my warning and the jungle acted as a barrier for us.

Alter-Armours that were still flying in the air were swept away and were damaged as they clashed into each other. All this damage came from a single kick, but it was enough to destroy weak Alter-Armours. That kick was strong enough to split a Space Carrier in half.

However, the quartet avoided the attack by flying in circular motions. Avoiding the direct attack of the Infernal Stinger was manageable, but it was the shockwaves that dealt the most damage. Even so, the four Master-class Alter-Armours resisted the shockwaves.

The four Master-class machines began flying with great maneuvering skills and speed while shooting the Connecting Pegasus Shots. Diablo also flew at great speeds to avoid the attacks, but the Connecting Pegasus Shots chased it down and hit it square on the green plasma specks.

The green plasma responded with the Connecting Pegasus Shots and exploded while releasing plasma storms.

Those explosions occurred one after another and Diablo the Black Tyrant started to become sluggish.

“Wow, I've heard about it, but I didn't expect the pilot to be this inexperienced.”

His capacity should be excellent, seeing that he could actually get the Kishin Diablo to move. The power behind that Infernal Stinger was passable as well. However, he lacked experience.

On the other hand, the four Federation Master-class Armours were avoiding Diablo's attacks and continued to deal damage to the Kishin. They might actually be able to take down Diablo the Black Tyrant by themselves.

[But this is good. Mining base is secured. We request evac! Over!]

Ensign Meihowa requested to the commanding office after seeing the Ursa Major Brigade members rescuing the hostages. However, the commanding office operator snickered and said this.

[Wait for the Kishin Diablo to be taken care of. Over.]

Hmm... it was true that it would be unsafe to be rescued while the Kishin Diablo was still moving. We could be swept up in one of its attacks and die. However, the commanding team was more concerned about securing the Diablo than rescuing the hostages.

“Tch, I can’t believe that’s all he can do with a good Kishin like that.”

Of course, my Dawnbringer was a far better Kishin (speaking subjectively) but I suppose I would be happy with any Alter-Armour at a time like this.

—Kishin Arts: Storm Lash!

Black light came out from Diablo's horn and it gathered in both of its hands. Diablo swung its hands and crossed them in front of his eyes.

Electric volts and shockwaves tore the sky open and overwhelmed the smaller Alter-Armours. It possessed immense strength. It was enough to destroy a Space Carrier like the Archimedes with ease!

However, the Master-class machines were far better. They flew up to avoid the Storm Lash and also Phase Shifted to avoid the rest.

Once again, they started shooting at the Diablo.

Chains of explosions took place. Anyone could see that the Diablo's pilot was confused.

Seeing the enemy Kishin in that state, the remaining Federation Alter-Armours landed on the ground and bombarded it with their attacks.

Now Diablo was no different from a sandbag. Diablo's pilot was still unable to maintain balance and was swaying from side to side, and the continuous attacks from the Federation did not help.

[Wow, as expected of a Kishin. It's bloody strong.]

[I'll say. It's still hanging in there no matter how much we attack.]

Now, the quartet was even joking around.

[Now, now! We can't let it escape now. We'll pierce right through its cockpit!]

The de-facto leader of the four prepared itself.

Wow, the difference between their experiences was huge. I suppose this couldn't be helped because Elcros, Asas and Rebel Replicants do not have a specific training facility to train Alter-Armour pilots.

I sighed in relief. I remembered how I was worried that a powerful force might enter the battlefield.

But seeing this situation, that was very unlikely. That Kishin Diablo will now fall because of its weak pilot and the pilot will be put to shame by the four Master-class pilots.

However, things started to change.

Wriiiiiing!

Blue light started emitting from the Diablo. The light rapidly shone out and exploded to all directions.

I quickly put up my grey barrier, without caring if someone saw me or not, and protected the Spider.

Bzzz!

The blue electrical volts sent ripples to the heavens. Fire broke out in some parts of the jungle and all Alter-Armours, including the four Master-classes, were knocked back by the shock.

—Kishin Arts: Lion's Roar!

Huh? What did it just say?

Admiral Louise also appeared to be as shocked as I was.

“Dawnbringer!?”

That's right... that Lion's Roar was my baby's; my Dawnbringer's technique! But how did the Diablo, a Kishin that was of a different system than mine, use the Lion's Roar?

[Unbelievable!]

[Lion's Roar?]

The voices of the surprised pilots came over the terminals. They were not seriously shocked of course, but rather, they were amused at the unexpected attack.

Kishins could imitate simple techniques from different systems. If the pilot's ability was superb, then the technique could be performed convincingly. Also, Diablo and Dawnbringer were from similar systems.

Hence, among the 8 Kishins, no, 12 Kishins these days I suppose. One could say that Diablo and Dawnbringer were brother-like in regards to their systems.

However, that Lion's Roar just now almost seemed like the real Dawnbringer's Lion's Roar.

Ah, it was nothing compared to the Lion's Roar that I used to do, but seeing that Lion's Roar from an inexperienced pilot like him was an insult to my Dawnbringer.

Diablo straightened itself up while still afloat. The fluorescent plasma specks were all gone after that Lion's Roar. The damage it had taken before started to recover rapidly.

Seeing that, the Master-class pilots began to panic. They were beating the Diablo with all they had. However, all that damage began to recover in seconds.

[You puny pests, I was only going let the miners leave alive after I play around with the soldiers for a while!]

We could hear the roaring voice of the Diablo's pilot. The voice did not come from the terminals or by the Alter-Armour. He shouted with his strength alone, amplified by the Diablo, and echoing across Azoran-3's atmosphere.

The battlefield quickly began to change.

10. Madness

Everything happened in an instant.

Diablo threw a kick at the four Master-classes, and the four Alter-Armours dispersed to avoid the attack.

Of course, Diablo's kick was powerful enough to destroy Alter-Armours without actually landing a physical hit. However, the Master quartet produced a barrier to lessen the shockwaves and avoided any serious damage from Diablo's kick.

However...

—Kishin Arts! Lightning Fire Piercing Fist!

Diablo's fist extended at the quartet with unbelievable speed and angle and hit one of the Master-class Armours. A barrier was not enough to protect from this attack.

The Master-class machine shattered with that single attack as a beam of light tore through its body, and into outer space.

That attack just now, Lightning Fire Piercing Fist, was also one of Dawnbringer's attacks! But, that was not at a level of mere imitation. Diablo shouldn't be able to pull off that kind of a Lightning Fire Piercing Fist, even if Diablo and Dawnbringer were similar.

The Diablo pilot was still relatively new to Alter-Armour piloting. But he could mimic Dawnbringer's attacks to that level!

Damn it! That bastard! Are you looking down on the Dawnbringer? Give me my Dawnbringer! I'll make his Kishin Arts look amateurish!

Ah, I'm so mad. But it's not like Dawnbringer would just drop out of the sky simply because I was losing my cool.

Let us analyze this situation critically. The Master quartet was literally playing around with the Black Tyrant, with ease up until just now. That was because the great difference between piloting skills outweighed the Alter-Armours' abilities.

Then why was the quartet being driven into a corner right now?

That was because the Kishin's ability increased unbelievably.

[N-No way! How can this be?!]

[Has he been hiding his true strength?]

The pilots' voices of despair leaked over the terminals. If the quartet loses, then there won't be any others who would be able to fight against the Kishin Diablo. Everyone on this battlefield will lose hope and die!

[We should've retreated while we still had the chance! We're all gonna die at this rate!]

[No, we still would've died if one of those attacks hit the rescue ship.]

[At least we could've had some chance of escaping! Now we're all done for!]

Everyone began to panic, seeing Diablo's overpowered form.

The quartet, with a machine down, continued to weave in and out of Diablo's attacks and fight back. However, avoiding the attacks proved to be difficult due to Diablo's increased speed.

One of the attacking Master-classes turned towards Diablo's armpit area hidden behind its cape.

"No!"

But it was too late. A translucent, rainbow-coloured arm suddenly emerged from Diablo's armpit. The arm, resembling the scythe of a praying mantis, extended and cut the Alter-Armour down in a blink of an eye.

A Master-class Alter-Armour had terrific defence, but the attack was unstoppable! The Alter-Armour was cut in half and fell towards the ground instantly. The remaining two Armours, as well as many other soldiers attacking from the ground, lost all hope.

[This is the end!]

The scythe-like arm from Diablo's armpit rose and tried to swing down in an arc. If that attack hits, then everyone on the ground will die!

[Argh!]

But suddenly, Diablo stopped, and the pilot's screams echoed out.

[Uuuuu... no!]

The Diablo's pilot screamed, and the Federation Alter-Armours seized the opportunity and commenced their attacks again.

But Diablo swung its arm out of reflex and scratched the Alter-Armours. Its claws instantly ripped off a Master-class' head.

Creak!

And a kick followed, ripping right into its neck. The Master-class Alter-Armour was destroyed in an instant.

The remaining Alter-Armour tried to draw closer, but Diablo swung a kick at it without even looking. A powerful energy explosion followed the kick and blew the clouds away. The heavens shook and the Alter-Armour disintegrated in an instant.

The pilot's action was nothing like before and almost beast-like.

[It hurts!]

—It hurts!

The pilot's screams and Diablo's thoughts rang out at the same time.

Wait, what? What's going on? I've lived my life with Kishin Dawnbringer as its pilot for a long time, but I have never witnessed a situation like this before.

There was research conducted a long time ago that stated that Alter-Armours do not feel pain when damaged, because there are no nerves in its structure. But the Alter-Armour was thinking that it hurts?

Or did the pilot's thoughts echo out via Diablo's?

[H-Humans! Run away! I cannot control it!]

The pilot inside the Diablo screamed. He really didn't want to kill the miners, did he?

Diablo, on the other hand, didn't seem to share the same agenda as its pilot, because it was dishing out its attacks in all directions. The Alter-Armour swung its scythe at everything that dared to approach it.

Space itself began to rip and the shockwaves from the Diablo caused plasma storms in the sky, fiery storms on the ground, and tsunamis at sea.

It was out of control like it wanted to destroy the planet itself.

It was squeezing out every drop of his strength like an ill patient struggling.

The Alter-Armours of the Ursa Major Brigade were blown off their feet like loose leaves and crumbled.

The Diablo wasn't destroying the Alter-Armours on purpose. It was simply trying to release its pent-up energy, and the Alter-Armours just happened to be in its way.

[Everyone! Get away as far as you can from the Diablo! We must survive!]

Ensign Meihowa gave the order and began to protect the soldiers by using the Spider as a barrier.

The navy men of the Ursa Major Brigade also followed what she was doing, and began to transport the miners and the soldiers by using the remaining Alter-Armours as a barrier.

We all took refuge in the jungle, away from the rampaging Diablo.



The sun set on Azoran-3. Even so, the sky was still well lit-up by the fierce fires.

Diablo was still rampaging.

When the Diablo spread out its arms and released its energy, incredible amounts of energy spat out towards the poles of this planet. Air ionized and hyperspace began to form. The sight of the red line spreading across the sky resembled the sky splitting in half.

Diablo's horn began to release black electric volts and the volts ran along the line of hyperspace created by its outstretched arms. The volts fell towards the ground as it travelled.

All lands under the line running from the South Pole to the North Pole... were struck by the lightning. Flora burned up and the land shook. Pillars of fire protruded towards the sky and smoke continued to puff out endlessly.

Was the Black Tyrant really going to destroy everything on Azoran-3?! Everything on Azoran-3 will be destroyed in 12 hours at the earliest, and 24 hours at the latest.

The apocalyptic scene scared the living daylights out of the surviving soldiers.

"We're not the only ones surprised. Even the Elcros are retreating."

Admiral Louise spoke as she inspected the situation with her Clairvoyance. Diablo the Black Tyrant's rampage was something also unexpected to the Alliance.

The rescue team of the Ursa Major Brigade that was in outer space had retreated because of the Diablo.

The rescue mission had failed. And to make things worse, we couldn't even surrender to the Alliance now. No-one would be able to approach Azoran-3 as long as the Kishin Diablo was rampaging.

"B-But we have the Federation Kishins!"

"We can be rescued for sure if the Ursa Major steps in!"

There were a few soldiers who tried to stay positive, but they didn't seem to be very convinced by their own words, because they were trembling in fear.

The Fourth Platoon was receiving the messages via Ensign Meihowa, but the mining base and Ursa Major survivors had no way of receiving any messages. They were trying to understand the situation by listening to public broadcasts, but only



news that would make them despair even more was being broadcasted at the moment.

The TV broadcast was reporting the news of the Federation and the Alliance fighting in the Oden system and that the rescue operation in the Azoran system had failed, and that rescue operation forces were retreating.

“Oh my god!”

“Are they abandoning us?!”

“No way!”

Complaints broke out from the soldiers. The Oden system was owned by the Elcro, but it was also a solar system that the Federation highly valued.

The news had reported that the Federation and the Alliance were fighting in that solar system.

Omertà the Shadowlord.

Arc-razor the Space Cutter.

Minerva the Erudite.

Saika the Brilliant God of Thunder.

Ginnungagap the Satan of the Abyss.

All five of the mentioned Kishins of the Alliance appeared in the Oden system and warred with the Federation, while the Federation sent their own Kishins.

Wolfschewein the Grey Tempest

Ladyhawk the Unparalleled Celerity.

Swangrace the Guardian Angel.

As well as Ursa Major the Violet Emperor, who should've been in the Azoran system!

All four of the Federation Kishins, that had a chance of stopping the rampaging Diablo, were in a different solar system.

Hence, we cannot escape the Azoran system— even when the rampaging Diablo was going to destroy Azoran-3 in less than 24 hours.



After having dinner with some simple rations, I began to warm up.

The Federation and the Alliance. Which side should I pick?

That question continued to confuse me. However, there was only one thing that I had to do for now.

—I have to stop Diablo's rampage.

Although I did not possess great strength, I was the only one who could stop Diablo's rampage.

But suddenly, I heard something.

[Lezirth, could you come to me?]

Admiral Louise called me first.

What did she want, I wonder?

I went to where she had called me to. Sergeant Aroha and Admiral Louise were waiting for me, slightly away from the downcast soldiers and on top of a small boulder in the mangrove jungle.

Admiral Louise chose not to face me, but still addressed me with her back turned.

“Lezirth, you plan to fight Diablo, don’t you?”

She’d already predicted what I was going to do. I nodded my head.

“Yes.”

“I would like to ask of you not to do anything stupid, but you won’t listen, would you?”

Her voice was quivering. Her shoulders also shivered like her voice.

I instantly thought of hugging her and supporting her, but I decided against it. The only way of supporting her was not to show kind gestures, but rather give up on defeating the Diablo.

I smiled bitterly instead of answering.

“The enemy’s strength is unprecedeted. I cannot allow you to step into action without understanding its powers.”

“.....”

“But you would still go, wouldn’t you, Lezirth? Because... that’s exactly what you did 120 years ago as well.”

120 years ago. She was talking about none other than the final battle of the Letix War, the battle in the Atlantic Solar System.

I also ignored her warnings and stepped into the final battle.

It was the war where the Children of Letix died one by one. And only two Kishin-class pilots remained in the end.

There were 8 Kishins left, but only two of them could be manoeuvred—the Dawnbringer that led the attack at the front, and the Tetragrammaton that supported the war with long distance attacks at the back.

She insisted against me going after seeing our siblings die out, telling me to wait until new Kishin-class pilots could be found. That the war will end on a safer note when the other six Kishin pilots could be found...

However, the Letix were already growing by absorbing energy and minerals from other stars, while the Kishin-class pilots were being nurtured. And hundreds of thousands of soldiers had to die to buy time for the pilots.

I liked my subordinates, and the people whom I worked with.

They loved to play cards and used up their money until their credit card balance hit rock bottom before their pay day. Some of them loved to get into fights on the internet forums and such.

However, they were the true heroes. People hailed me as a war hero, but I was nothing but a fake. I was born in a lab and I was genetically closer to a Letix, not a human.

I had to be on the battlefield because there was nowhere else I would be recognised for who I am. But they were different.

They had loved ones to return to, and to protect. They were people who could always run away, but they sacrificed themselves by my side during that battle.

I didn't want their deaths to be in vain.

I wanted to continue to protect the world that they loved.

I couldn't let the hundreds of thousands of deaths be in vain just for my safety.

So I made her cry. I went against Admiral Louise's orders and challenged the Letix Uberlord.

"You betrayed me once. No, you betrayed me many times."

Admiral Louise's body was shaking. She was crying.

"I'm sorry."

I extended my hand and wiped away her tears. But once again, I had to betray her. She must've known that I would, because she clung onto my chest even tighter.

I hugged her back.

"If something happens to you now, 120 years in the future... I will be the only remaining person of our time, Lezirth. Why can't you understand me?"

"I... just have to not die. Do you really think I will be killed by a child like him? I am Lezirth Dawnbringer, the Commander of Dawn Corps."

I laughed. That's right. The enemy was weak. The way it rampaged was nothing compared to the enemies I once faced off against.

But I didn't have my Dawnbringer with me right now!

But I have to laugh. The least I could do right now, was to put on a tough act before the girl who was afraid of losing me.

Because I've already done this many, many times before!

—Zznnnig!

I felt a slight headache and could suddenly hear someone whispering in my ear.

'Lezirth... don't abandon me. I've waited for you. A lot longer than you think.'

I felt dizzy all of a sudden. What's going on? I looked up in surprise. Admiral Louise was looking at me with moist eyes.

"I don't want to be betrayed by you any longer. So Lezirth, I will let you go willingly."

"....."

"There is Dawnbringer inside that Diablo."

She said that with a matter-of-fact tone. I couldn't help but to be surprised.

Admiral Louise's specialities were Telepathy and Clairvoyance.

And these skills were as dangerous as teleporting.

Since the hyperspace creatures were so large and big, people thought of them as some sort of demonic fiends, but some hyperspace creatures could be seen in the third dimension, like one would be able to see a dot or a line.

And some creatures shone in the third dimension, so they could only be detected by electronic waves.

The giant hyperspace creatures that could be physically seen were called Demons and the minuscule virus-type, or DNA-stranded forms of hyperspace creatures were called Devils.

Teleport users could easily be detected by the Demons, while the Telepathy users could easily be detected by the Devils. And being detected usually resulted in the user's death.

Hence, there were two general rules for a powerful Telepathy user.

The first was to never use their telepathic abilities on strong Alter-Armours, such as the Kishins or any other Demons.

The second was to never use their telepathic abilities on rampaging people.

Those two were the ground rules.

Rampaging people attracted Devil-type hyperspace creatures, and could infect the telepathy user with its powers when a connection is made.

But in this case, it was a Kishin on a rampage! Studying it with telepathy or clairvoyance was far too dangerous. It was suicidal!

However, Admiral Louise's eyes were shining. She had forcefully connected herself to the Diablo with her powers and was analyzing the situation!

"Stop! What are you doing! Don't do that! You'll die like this!"

I tried to stop Admiral Louise, but she shook her head in refusal.

"You didn't listen to me either! So Lezirth!"

At that moment, a drop of blood fell from her nose. But she continued to look at me with a stern expression.

"Currently, the Dawnbringer has been split up into pieces and some of it is in Diablo, as some sort of a strengthening part. The pilot joined the Dawnbringer's part with Diablo when he was driven into a corner, and that was why the Diablo felt pain. Diablo began to rampage like an ill patient because of the Dawnbringer's piece."

“Louise!”

“Don’t worry. I... have a device that will naturally cut off my brain if I become possessed by the Devil... so I won’t be leaving an effect on this dimension.”

“That’s not what I mean! Louise!”

“Unfortunately... I cannot actually fight without the Tetragrammaton. All I can do is collect the information and assist Lezirth with it.”

Admiral Louise smiled.

“So I will let you go, Lezirth. Please, save Diablo and Dawnbringer, as well as our friends stuck on this planet. That way, I won’t be betrayed by you.”

She weakly smiled and stroked my face with her hand.

I felt her hand and hugged her tight. Her body felt cool compared to the hot weather, but I could feel her temperature rising.

The life support system built in to the uniform activated because of the sudden rise in temperature.

“B-But...”

“The Lezirth I see before me... is the Commander of Dawn Corps, and the bravest and the strongest of all men. The world may not know it, but I...”

She closed her eyes before finishing her sentence.

N-No... no way.

—Emergency life support system mode. Activated.

That message was displayed on her uniform.

I suddenly teared up.

Am I going to be only one left in this future?! I wouldn’t be able to bear it if Admiral Louise disappears. This universe felt so empty and lonely all of a sudden.

"Ah... no. This is...."

I blankly looked at Admiral Louise.

Sergeant Aroha slowly approached Admiral Louise and checked her pulse.

"Hmm... Lezirth."

"What?"

I hid my face with my hand from her. I was ashamed to show her that I was crying. No, it would definitely be shameful for a sergeant to see me, the Commander of Dawn Corps, crying.

But right now, I was... I couldn't... keep my composure...

Why did she risk her life? Did she risk her life because I was about to fight the enemy without any information?

Just to increase my chances of winning ever so slightly? She risked dying for me just to raise my chances of winning?!

I'm not worth it!

Like she said, I betrayed her.

I failed to save her from that research centre! I abandoned her and stepped onto the battlefield!

But now I finally realized something with her death. She was my sibling, and my partner! She was born only days apart from me and lived for the same period of time, and even now, 120 years in the future!

She was so precious to me... I can't lose her like this.

Suddenly, Sergeant Aroha raised her hand and slapped my cheek.

"Hey, listen carefully to what I'm about to say. It's very important, so listen carefully!"

"Huh?"

“Louise Maynard is....”

“Huh?”

“Just sleeping.”

“Eh?”

“Look.”

When I looked, Admiral Louise was indeed asleep. But what about the life support system?

“The life support system probably accidentally switched itself on after her biorhythm fell so low, and also because of the sudden rise in temperature. Aside from that, she’s fine.”

Sergeant Aroha said that and flashed a smile at me.

“Sorry for hitting you. Oh, look, she’s just entered into REM sleep. Isn’t she sleeping well?”

“.....”

“Look, she’s breathing and everything.”

Indeed, Admiral Louise was sleeping while breathing softly.

“Mm, Lezirth. Heh heh, you’re mine.”

I didn’t know what she was dreaming about, but she said my name while moving around.

The way she rolled around was so lovely; I couldn’t help but to laugh. Sergeant Aroha snickered.

“You two are so weird. What did you get all emotional about anyway?”

“N-No... that’s... hmm. I, geez, heh heh.”

Tsk. H-How embarrassing. But it was Sergeant Aroha who couldn't understand, because she wasn't a psychic user. She doesn't know the great risks involved in the use of psychic abilities. Hmph!

"Fufu."

Sergeant Aroha kneeled on the floor and rested Admiral Louise's head on her lap.

"Then I'll be looking after her."

"Huh?"

"You have something to do, don't you? Get going."

"Ah, that's right. I should go."

"But don't teleport. The Ursa Major Brigade is with us after all. Didn't you say you had to hide your identity?"

"... That's right."

"And come here."

She motioned me to come with her finger. When I approached her without thinking too deeply into it, she told me to come a bit closer.

She pointed at Admiral Louise's ear. I wonder if something went in there.

As soon as I bowed my head to see what was going on, Sergeant Aroha hugged my neck.

"Urpp. What do you want? Sergeant Aroha?"

"Well, you know. I just wanted to hug the legendary war hero. Maybe I have what it takes to be a groupie."

Wasn't a groupie one of those people who chased after rock bands or famous celebrities? What's gotten into her to say that?

"I'm starting to think you are actually the real Lezirth Dawnbringer."

"Ha, and who's the one who wouldn't believe me, no matter how much I told you guys."

I smiled and waved my hand at Sergeant Aroha.

"Then Sergeant, just be waiting for me with a joyful heart. I will show you exactly why Lezirth Dawnbringer is a legendary war hero."



I inspected the situation via the military computer. Some drones deployed by the Ursia Major Brigade were still active, so I was able to see the Diablo rampaging.

But there certainly was something wrong with the Diablo at the moment. It's strong, energetic attacks were no more, and Diablo was walking around like a drunkard.

It seemed like Admiral Louise had done something with the Dawnbringer piece sleeping inside the Diablo to aid me.

However, the Ursia Major Brigade was the problem. My Teleportation ability alone was ranked SSS. If they happen to witness me, the Federation might begin their crackdown and I might be revealed to the ones who put me in cold sleep.

Well, even if the ones who put me in cold sleep were gone, and only the empty Federation remained, I didn't want to show off my abilities.

'But I hope we could stay together in the same platoon.'

That was what Ensign Meihowa said. With Admiral Louise, Sergeant Aroha... and Pencolt too, I suppose? Anyhow, I really liked this platoon.

If my abilities are revealed, then Admiral Louise and the platoon and I would be torn apart. I had to hide my abilities to prevent that.

Then that means I either have to walk, or use a vehicle like a car or a bike...

While I was having those thoughts, someone riding a bike stopped in front of me. The bike was a two-wheeled bike, with carbon nanotube frames and a battery holder for the power.

The Thorium battery in the battery holder was sufficient enough to drive this bike for 120 years without stopping. The light and trustworthy Thorium batteries were compatible with all Federation equipment.

It was fairly clear that these were long lasting, because only the appearance has changed since 120 years ago.

“Where are you going, Lezirth?”

Riding the bike was a silver-haired half-Elcro girl. Ensign Meihowa looked at me from the bike.

“I’m just going to borrow your Alter-Armour.”

“Then I will go with you as well. I locked it with my authority when I hid it in the sea, so you wouldn’t be able to unlock it without me. You won’t be able to turn it on either. Unless you can hack into the military computers like Louise.”

“It’ll be dangerous.”

“It won’t be the first time being in danger.”

Ensign Meihowa took out an instructor’s baton and tapped the seat behind her.

Hmm... wouldn’t it be better for a man, such as me, to drive?

The thought crossed my mind, but it wasn’t something that I could easily say.

I sat behind her without a complaint and grabbed the rear seat’s frame with my hands.

“You can put your hands around my waist. We can go faster like that.”

W-Will that be okay?

I shyly scratched the tip of my nose.

“I’ll be hugging you from the back, you know?”

“Ah! I-It’s not like I like it. But it’s an urgent situation right now, isn’t it?”

“It... is an urgent situation.”

“Then why don’t you ride without holding onto anything and fly off and bump into a tree? It can be your new training. If you don’t like that, then you must put your hands around me. It’s okay! I am your senior and Lezirth, you’re just my subordinate!”

“I suppose. Now isn’t the time to waste time by being embarrassed.”

I breathed in deeply and slowly put my hands around her waist. She felt soft and tender. I would be touching her breasts if I move my hands up a bit further, wouldn’t I? I need to be careful so I don’t do that.

But it really is embarrassing to be riding like this. I was hugging her so tight that my chest, stomach and my private parts were stuck closely to her back and butt.

My heart was beating unbelievably fast even though I was only hugging her without saying a thing. The fast heartbeat made my neck and ears itch.

The sound of my heartbeat echoed against my eardrums like roaring thunder. I could hear my heartbeat ever so loudly even though Meihowa was driving the bike at full speed.

The electric bike was far too quiet. I should strike up a conversation to get my mind off things.

And the first thing I thought of to break that ice was... something rather ridiculous.

“Um... Meihowa, your abs must be clearly visible. I can tell by the feel of them.”

Damn! What am I saying? Why was that the first thing I said...

“Th-That’s because I am a soldier. I-It’s only obvious. B-But it doesn’t have the distinct lines like males’ six-packs.... Hnyaa.”

My face instantly turned red. I could feel Meihowa being slightly surprised.

When I faced straight ahead without turning my head... I could see Meihowa wings. Her wings fluttered in the wind and they felt slightly weird when they touched my face.

Hmm... how should I say this? They felt boneless and muscular? Or something quite tense and stringy seemed to comprise her wings.

Without thinking too deeply into it, I rested my face on her wings just out of curiosity.

Hmm, there were no bones, but they felt soft and tender when I pressed against them. So this was why she was fine with resting her back against the chairs or laying on beds.

The mystery has been solved!

But while I was happy about my find, something happened.

“Hnyaaa...”

Hmm? Didn’t I just hear a weird sound? I swear I heard that strange noise even against the rushing winds.

“D-Don’t do that! At least not while I’m driving! I know I said I would allow you to touch them, but now is not the time!”

“Hmm? Are you ticklish?”

I loosened my hand and touched one of her wings slightly. When I did, she yelled again.

“Stop it! I’m not ticklish!”

“Then what?”

“No, the thing is... it’s not ticklish. It doesn’t hurt and it’s not supposed to feel anything, but...”

She was going nowhere with her explanations. Seeing her like that was so interesting that I had to touch her wings again.



She certainly didn't appear to be ticklish or in pain. Then what about if I lightly brush her wing with my fingers?

"Hiing.... Sniff. G-Geez, I'm telling you that's dangerous!"

"Ah... S-Sorry."

I suppose my teasing went over the line. I hugged her waist again. Maybe it was just my imagination, but she felt hotter than before.

"Haa..."

My breathing also became coarse. I wanted to hug her tighter. No. I actually wanted to...

Wait, no, I can't do that!

I desperately dispelled my animal-like instinct. The fact of the matter is, Ensign Meihowa was giving me a ride, and I cannot show those physical reactions in return. I'd rather force myself to teleport instead.

"Ensign Meihowa! I'd rather..."

But since I was tightly hugging her back, her wing came into my mouth without me meaning to as I opened it to talk.

Then she screamed. She lost control and the bike flew after hitting some obstacle on the ground.

"Damn! This wasn't what I planned!"

I used my psychic powers to catch her and the bike from the fall. The bike was approximately 70kgs while Ensign Meihowa was....

I'll be skipping the details to protect her privacy.

I jogged to a slow stop while keeping up that weight with my powers. Ensign Meihowa started to kick and struggle and hit me.

"I told you not to do that! Lezirth! You idiot! You Greenie!"

“No, that was a mistake... I’m sorry.”

Her punches were powerful considering she was a female, but that was to be expected because she was a soldier. I put up a barrier with my powers to defend myself and I put her down.

“Well, at least we’re nearly there.”

“Geez!”

She straightened up her helmet and started to operate the military computer.

The Alter-Armour hiding under the sea reacted to her actions and rose up. It must’ve had a tough time under the sea because of Diablo’s rampages before, because it was plastered with seaweed all over its body.

Despite the ordinary armour coating and the metal outer gauntlets, it resembled an insect or a crustacean.

But it also resembled a medieval knight with a set of armour; as expected of an Alter-Armour from the Dawnbringer line. I suppose one could say that it shared some features that were unique to hand-to-hand combat types.

However, the problem was that this Alter-Armour was far too small compared to the Kishin Dawnbringer, or the Kishin Diablo—the enemy it must face.

“It’s really small now that I see it.”

The Minion-class Alter-Armour was really small compared to the Kishin-class Diablo. This Alter-Armour didn’t even measure up to a single Diablo’s limb, and their weapons were beyond comparison.

“Are you really going to try... with this?”

“Admiral Louise woke up the Dawnbringer inside Diablo. If I can crack Diablo’s outer armour even slightly, I can get Dawnbringer out from that gap. This is an opportunity that Admiral Louise created while even risking her own life. I cannot let that go to waste.”

“Dawnbringer? Are you saying that the Dawnbringer is inside Diablo right now?”

“Yes. That’s why the Diablo rampaged like that.”

“How do you know that? That’s...”

“I’ve told you before, right? I’m Lezirth Dawnbringer.”

After replying, I jumped up to the Alter-Armour’s cockpit in a single leap. Ensign Meihowa climbed up using the rope hanging down from the cockpit.

“It’s amazing you could cover this distance with a jump.”

She opened the cockpit door. The door was placed on the machine’s lower abdomen and into the chest of the machine. However, it was quite a squeeze for Ensign Meihowa and I.

“I can’t pass on the register key to you. Because you have to be at least a Sergeant to be an Alter-Armour pilot.”

“Then we’ll go tandem mode.”

Ensign Meihowa fiddled with the military computer and set the machine on tandem mode at my request.

I sat on the pilot’s seat first and looked at her. Ensign Meihowa’s face quickly became red.

“D-Do I... have to sit on you?”

“This is the only way to go tandem in a Minion-class... it can’t be helped, can it?”

And it was even worse in a small cockpit like this.

“M-My wings.”

“Huh?”

“Promise me you won’t touch my wings! Lezirth!”

She glared at me suspiciously.

"O-Of course. That just now was an accident. I did it out of my will at first, but the last one was an accident!"

"I-If you say so! Fine. I'll believe you! Aroha said that I should never trust a man who says 'you trust me, right babe' but Lezirth! I can trust you because you didn't say 'you trust me, right babe', right?!"

She grudgingly sat on my lap. I could see her white neck through her hair. I was mesmerized by the beauty of the sight that I subconsciously muttered out.

"How pretty."

"Huh?"

Ensign Meihowa suddenly lowered her head. Her neck and her ears began to get rosy.

"What d-did you say?"

"I-I just said it's pretty nice to be riding in an Alter-Armour after such a long time."

I feigned innocence and she sighed in relief.

"A-Anyhow, just don't touch my wings. Got it?"

"Yes, I got it."

I nodded my head. Ensign Meihowa's body felt so good against my own, but I had other things to concentrate on for now.

"It's been so long since I rode an Alter-Armour."

"But I wonder if the Alter-Armour would operate on tandem when the gauging machine reset itself continuously the other day."

Ensign Meihowa seemed to be worried, but when I concentrated, the Minion-class Alter-Armour awoke.

—Whirrrl!

The Alter-Armour began to move with a powerful mechanical whirl. Ensign Meihowa was amazed at what was happening.

“Oh my goodness! What is with the figure? I can’t believe it!”

“Now then, shall we fetch what we need?”

“You have something that you need? Ah, equipment? Ammunition?”

“That too... but I need some energy-gel, atropine and adrenaline.”

“Huh? Is it because you’re hungry? I’ve got some energy-gel... but atropine and adrenaline?”

Ensign Meihowa tilted her head, puzzled. She was so lovely, turning around to look at me while seated on my lap. Damn it, I can’t lose myself here.

“Hmm, well you’ll see why.”

I manoeuvred the Alter-Armour and headed to the jungle near the mining base, because there were some energy-gel, atropine and adrenaline that we left there when we fled in a hurry. I can supply myself there.

And that was where Diablo would be waiting for us.

11. Holy Sword of Dawn

In order to retrieve some energy-gels and other medical supplies, we had to hide ourselves. We were stepping onto Diablo's territory and we could be killed in an instant if we were noticed.

I could feel Ensign Meihowa becoming more and more nervous as we approached the Diablo.

“Are you okay, Ensign? You can always get off if you’re scared.”

The Alter-Armour was switched on, so things should be fine somehow. There was no need to take her with me to the lion’s den.

However, Ensign Meihowa shook her head.

“I’m not scared.”

“Really? A Minion-class like this will disintegrate in an instant from a blow from Diablo. You would be gone before you even feel any pain.”

“I-I am scared, but I’m not scared!”

She spat out words that made no sense. I smirked, seeing her slightly turning her head to look back at me.

“You’re not lying, are you? Fine, let’s get going then! You can’t get off now, Meihowa! My fighting style can work with tandem piloting! No! We would die if we don’t pilot a Minion-class in tandem! We must tandem it! Help me!”

“Fine!”

Meihowa’s voice was energetic! Great, let’s go!

—Imitation Change: Camouflage!

The Alter-Armour instantly made itself transparent. Although it was not shifting into a different dimension to allow physical objects to pass through it like Phase Shifting, it just blended into its surroundings.

Alter-Armours that had been based off the Letix; hyperspace creatures, had the ability to change the laws of physics while obeying them at the same time.

But of course, those built-in skills of the Alter-Armours were useless unless the pilot knew about the skills and knew how to bring those skills out. However, the pilot who was operating this machine was I, the greatest pilot in the history of the Federation, Vice Admiral Lezirth Dawnbringer!

I operated the machine to go straight into the destroyed jungle ahead of us, while staying in this state. The jungle had already been reduced to ash because of the fire and I saw a glimpse of some military supply boxes in the ashes.

I snuck some of the boxes into the cockpit while Diablo wasn't paying attention. I opened the boxes with psychic powers to check the contents, and threw out everything apart from energy-gels, adrenaline and atropine.

I stocked up greatly on the energy-gels in particular, because this was the key element to my plan.

"Good. I suppose we're all ready."

I finally finished preparing for the fight after stuffing the cockpit full of medical supplies.

Then suddenly, the communication channel opened.

[Umm, Lezirth?]

Admiral Louise was on the screen, rubbing her eyes. I was surprised and stared at her, frozen.

[Why... why are you with the Ensign? Are you going tandem? Are you in tandem right now?]

"Ah, you see... because I didn't have the operational right."

[Wait a minute! If you fight the Diablo with Federation equipment, then the battle records will remain anyway. And if you fight like that, your combat prowess will be revealed instantly! I'll delete the record, so there's no need to operate it in tandem!]

Admiral Louise really instantly deleted this Alter-Armour from the Federation database and turned this into an unregistered Alter-Armour. I could indeed operate this without tandem mode now. However, I shook my head.

“I need an assistant to fight with a Minion-class. It would take time to bring Ensign Meihowa to a safer place, and I need an assistant... so I will fight like this.”

[Hmm... that may be true, but for a male and a female to be in a small place like that is...!]

“The Tetragrammaton could attack the rescue force, so I think it would be wise to hurry.”

I quickly grabbed the cockpit handle. I used the nerves in my hand to contact the Alter-Armour.

Although the Alter-Armour was operating without any problems, it was still a Minion-class, it would be defeated by the Diablo in an instant.

I had to bring out the full potential of this Alter-Armour.

I concentrated my mind.

—I have to send my heart to this Alter-Armour and become its strength. Hence, I had to become the heart of this Alter-Armour.

“I am Lezirth Dawnbringer, and a partner to the Kishin Dawnbringer. Will you also lend me your strength?”

The Alter-Armour replied with a positive ring to my question. I quickly became sorry for this machine.

“My methods can be quite extreme. Can you forgive me?”

The Alter-Armour again replied with a positive ring. It did not know what suffering really was because it was more or less a newborn.

Alter-Armours couldn't feel pain of course, but they could feel suffering. And this little one will soon taste it.

“Amazing. The Alter-Armour... is responding like a real organism!”

Ensign Meihowa exclaimed. Hmm, I felt this all the time, but this must've been the first time for her.

"I really do feel bad about making a newborn go through a lot of suffering!"

Even as I said that, I raised my body. Now was the time to challenge the Diablo!

"Then I shall name this Alter-Armour, Dawnbringer Minion. Dawnbringer Minion! Activate battle mode!"

At that instant, golden light started to radiate from Dawnbringer Minion's body, below its dull armour.

◊ ◊ ◊

The unregistered machine, this small Minion-class machine walked up to the Diablo and boldly stood before it.

The mad black beast, measuring 40 meters tall, was emitting lightning from its horn and was burning down the sky, the ground and the seas. The Minion-class machine was no different from a boy confronting a giant.

However, the Minion-class was glowing with a golden aura and pointed its finger at the black beast, Kishin Diablo.

"You, pilot!"

My amplified voice came out not from the communication channel, but from the Alter-Armour's external speakers.

"I will save you, so you just wait there!"

The Minion-class measured 10 meters in height, a quarter of Kishin Diablo's height, and its strength was minuscule in comparison. If anyone was watching this scene, they would think that the Minion-class pilot was out of his mind.

But luckily, there were only five people who were watching this scene.

First was the pilot stuck in the Kishin Diablo. There were two pilots on board the Minion-class; Meihowa and I. And finally there were our two supporters, Louise and Aroha.

The fate of Azora-3 rested in the hands of these five people.

—Kishin Arts: Lightning Fire Piercing Fist!

Diablo extended its fist at the sudden challenger. No, it wasn't quite 'extended'. It was closer to 'fired'.

It measured a staggering height of 40 meters, and its limbs were disproportionately long. Its long arm flew towards us in a blink of an eye. Its speed was faster than the second cosmic velocity!

Air around the path of the fist was instantly ionized and turned to plasma, and the lightning flew at everything within a 300-meter radius. The punch performed exactly as it was named, Lightning Fire Piercing Fist!

If the punch makes contact with this Minion-class Alter-Armour, it would disappear without a trace.

However, something amazing happened. The gigantic, 40-meter tall black Kishin, Diablo, fell into the sea.

A gigantic pillar of water rose from the sea and caused a small tsunami on the shores.

"Wh-What?! Can you really save me?"

The pilot stuck inside the out of control Diablo realized something at that moment.

That the Minion-class Alter-Armour before its eyes was the one who was going to save him; not some Kishin from the Federation!



...

“Wouldn’t this do?”

I opened a pack of energy-gel as I said that. Ensign Meihowa was in the process of pouring the energy-gel into the emergency energy slot under the cockpit.

“H-How did you throw the Kishin away with a Minion-class? Was it Kishin Arts?”

“Dawnbringer-class telekinesis.”

I answered Ensign Meihowa as she looked back at me in shock.

“What is this warning noise from the cockpit? I’ve never seen this before.”

Red light was flashing inside the cockpit like lights in a nightclub.

“Ah! That’s just a sign to say that the Minion-class was stepping out of its limits. It’s something like humans getting dizzy from excessive or sudden exercise. It’s comparable to taking excessive insulin.”

That was why we were squeezing energy-gel into the machine.

My plan worked, for now.

I used my telekinesis to direct Diablo’s fist towards the ground.

After making the Lighting Fire Piercing Punch hit the ground, I used the opening to land a kick on its leg.

Would the Kishin-class machine even be affected by a kick from a Minion-class?

But thanks to the Kishin losing its balance after the misdirected punch, Diablo the Black Tyrant was already falling forwards.

“I’ll show you how to really use a Kishin!”

“This isn’t a Kishin-class, but a Minion-class!”

Ensign Meihowa retorted, but I silenced her retort.

“I am the Dawnbringer!”

—Martial Arts! Yama Arashi¹!

I had kicked Diablo's foot and planted Diablo straight into the sea.

However, the Minion-class Alter-Armour fell into a state of confusion because of the explosive amount of energy I forced it to attack the Black Tyrant with.

The warning light in the cockpit flashed like the lights at a nightclub on a Saturday night! What a great beat!

“Argh!”

The screaming belonging to either Diablo's pilot or the Kishin itself exploded out. Diablo swung its fist into the sea and raised itself up.

Its neck and limbs had broken from the fall, but it was recovering rather quickly.

I would've secured the victory at an opportunity like this, but our Alter-Armour was half dead from using the technique.

Diablo charged at us again. It spread out its arms and charged like a wild animal. Hyperspace was formed between its claws and became a giant net.

A normal pilot would be scared shitless at the sight, but Diablo had to do a lot more to scare me.

I performed a sidestep feint. I jumped to its side and dug deep without giving it a chance to respond.

As expected from an inexperienced pilot, it left its side wide open.

“Here I go!”

I threw a power fist onto Diablo's body. With the clear hit, I let out an explosion! Activating the Coil Rifle, the punch accelerated and pierced through Diablo's armour!

Unlike the Kishin Diablo that was already blessed with strong abilities, lower-ranked Alter-Armours were equipped with Colion Rifles and electrically-powered power fists.

¹T/N: The technique was already written in Japanese. Literally means Mountain Storm.

Although I wasn't sure how much damage I could deal... it was better than nothing when supplemented by my psychic powers.

—Kishin Arts! ...Is what I'd like to call it, but just Martial Arts! Lightning Fire Piercing Fist!

The Cherenkov radiation seeped through the Diablo's body with the attack.

Although this Lightning Fire Piercing Fist was just a psychic-powered one, its strength still couldn't be ignored. I could probably take down a Minion-class Alter-Armour when I perform it barehanded. But performing it with an Alter-Armour should've strengthened the attack by a fair amount.

If the Diablo was just an ordinary 40-meter tall robot, it would've been reduced to dust by the punch.

However, Kishins possessed defensive ability that could disperse some of the received damage into hyperspace. The punch wouldn't have been enough to deal a great amount of damage to a Kishin.

But what if I attack in a chain combo?

I continued to attack Diablo's body. The pilot inside still didn't know what to do and was taking the beating.

But it was as tough as I expected! Diablo's armour certainly was cracking from the continuous hits, but it was recovering itself at the same time. What was even worse, Diablo began to get its head straight and tried to counter attack.

“Look out!”

I could hear Ensign Meihowa screaming loudly. And at the same time, Diablo raised its claws and swung them at Dawnbringer Minion!

“I've been waiting for that!”

As soon as the Diablo attacked, I escaped to the area under its armpit.

I knew of course that the Diablo possessed a hidden arm under its armpit and that it could slice apart a Minion-class Alter-Armour instantly.

But I dealt a strong blow to its hidden arm as I avoided it and swung around to Diablo's back and stood on the back of its neck. And a kick!

—Kishin Arts! ...Is what I'd like to call it, but just a normal kick!

The kick was measly compared to the Infernal Stinger from the Diablo, but a great amount of energy was behind the kick. Air ionized and plasma bounced off Diablo's head with the kick.

The 40-meter tall giant was kicked on the back of its head, fell and rolled across the sea. Pillars of water shot up and tsunamis slammed against the nearby islands.

“The difference between our skills is like heaven and earth! Now, I'll end it here!”

I supplied more energy to the Alter-Armour to finish off the Diablo.

But suddenly, the cockpit became dark. The Dawnbringer Minion that was hovering in mid-air suddenly stopped moving and began to fall.

“Kyaa!? What's going on?!”

Ensign Meihowa yelled. I protected her from the shock with my psychic abilities as I shouted.

“Damn, it turned off. Meihowa, pass me the atropine shot!”

“Oh my word! I don't know if we're dealing with an Alter-Armour, or a patient in an emergency ward here!”

Ensign Meihowa poked the atropine needle into the inner wall of the cockpit and the Dawnbringer Minion sprang back to life.

I quickly spurred Dawnbringer Minion from crashing into the sea and slowed down in mid-air.

“Whew, this guy can't handle it when I use too much strength. I guess it's too much for a Minion-class.”

“Will it be OK? The Alter-Armour will become a drug addict at this rate!”

"It should be fine, I suppose. There is no scientific report that shows that Alter-Armours can become drug addicts. *Probably*. Now, we're not that far away! We have to set Diablo free!"

When I grabbed the handle inside the cockpit, I could hear the machine groaning in complaint. Although it couldn't feel pain, it was feeling disheartened. Its confidence was now nowhere to be found.

As expected! This Alter-Armour probably didn't think that a pilot as harsh as me existed.

But it can't be helped, can it? This was the only way to fight a Kishin-class without dying while using a Minion-class. I was pushing this Alter-Armour to its absolute limits to fight the Kishin, but even a scratch from the Diablo could turn all of us into space dust.

—Grrrr!

Diablo the Black Tyrant slowly turned its head. It appeared to be extremely angry.

"We're going straight away! Give it a lot of energy-gel!"

"Ah... I should've brought a trench shovel."

Would you have shovelled the energy-gel if you'd brought one? Ensign Meihowa regretted her lack of preparation and threw in the energy-gels while opening the energy-packs half-heartedly.

—Roar!!

Diablo let out a war cry and swung its arms widely to attack. Its attacks created lightning that was far too powerful to be avoided, even with Phase Shifts.

A single hit can kill us! So I had to avoid all of its attacks.

"You're slow! Weak! How pitiful! Florid Dance!"

Dawnbringer Minion radiated golden light and jumped, weaving in and out of spaces, to avoid Diablo's attacks. I was in an Alter-Armour, so teleporting didn't scare me now!

Diablo turned around to chase my movements but I jumped to the back of its head to attack.

[You little pest!]

Suddenly, Diablo crossed its arms. Pale blue light began to radiate from its body.

This is dangerous!

—Kishin Arts! Lion's Roar!

As predicted! An EMP shockwave radiated from its body in all directions. I couldn't avoid this attack!

Lion's Roar was a relatively weak attack, but that was only in the cases when battling against another Kishin. A Minion-class can easily be shattered by the shockwave alone.

I have to face this one!

—Kishin Arts! Lion's Roar! ...Is what I'd like to call it, but just EMP!

I activated the EMP generator on Dawnbringer Minion's shoulders. It was pitifully weak because it was being performed mechanically, not via a Kishin Art like the real Diablo.

However, this weakened the Diablo's attack. I seized the opportunity to use telekinesis to kick Diablo's head again.

[Argh!]

Diablo's pilot screamed in pain and was knocked backwards. Thanks to that, the Lion's Roar from Diablo stopped.

However, Dawnbringer Minion was briefly nuked by the attack.

It was in this state even when I protected it with a psychic barrier and an EMP generator.

“This is not good! We’re nearly out of energy-gel!”

I heard Ensign Meihowa screaming. Damn it! I was holding my ground relatively well, but Diablo's regeneration power was far too powerful. Won't I end up in the same state as the Master-class quartet from the Ursa Major Brigade?

"Meihowa! Give it some adrenaline!"

I drove the Alter-Armour to Diablo's chest firing off the Coil Rifle as it was unsteady from the impact to its head. Diablo must be laughing at my attacks, because it didn't even bother to avoid them.

A series of explosions sounded. I quickly ran out of Coil Rifle ammunition because I was shooting at maximum output.

This time, I abandoned the Coil Rifle and slashed away at Diablo with the giant sword. Trying to avoid the attack, Diablo stepped back, but tripped and landed on a rocky mountain.

The mountain was scraped away as Diablo slid off it. However, Diablo's finger moved as it slid.

Diablo had flung a boulder with its finger—at the speed of sound, at that. It broke as it flew and sprayed plasma trails as it flew.

"Damn!"

I put up a psychic barrier and took on a defensive pose. Even I could defend myself, unarmed, if it was an attack of that level.

However, the problem was that Dawnbringer Minion was unable to fight at its full potential because of fatigue. The psychic barrier broke and the plasma jets struck Dawnbringer Minion.

"Kugh!"

—Danger! Inertia control has reached the limit!

The built-in computer inside the cockpit screamed at me. I protected Ensign Meihowa with telekinesis and backed off to land on the sea.

"Ughh..."

I was left defenceless because I was protecting Meihowa, and I felt the full impact of the attack. Everything before me turned red. I was bleeding internally in my eyes and my stomach was churning. I threw up blood from my mouth. I felt hot with dizziness and something slimy fell from my eyes.

“Lezirth!”

Meihowa screamed. But I shook my head.

“I’m fine! This was something quite common back in the days. The new cockpits have really improved.”

But the differences between the machines’ abilities were too great. The Kishin was perfectly fine even after all that beating I inflicted on it. My Alter-Armour on the other hand, couldn’t even use Kishin Arts and could be instantly reduced to rubble by a half-hearted attack from it.

“Hmm?”

My vision started to become hazy. Was I bleeding too much?

Brrrrrrrr!

Suddenly, Diablo’s body began to vibrate. A tree-like object began to grow from Diablo’s neck as it lay collapsed on the mountain.

It was a flora-type form that the Letix took on when they absorb energy and nutrients to recover themselves. Did Diablo form that to recover itself?

[Now is the time, Lezirth! That’s Dawnbringer!]

Admiral Louise suddenly called me via the communication channel.

“That’s Dawnbringer!?”

Now that she mentioned it, it did feel familiar. However, Dawnbringer Minion, the Alter-Armour that I was riding, couldn’t move properly because of the Kishin Arts attack.

“We’re out of energy-gel! There’s some canned coffee, but can we use it?”

“Caffeine? Great!”

“Geez, I feel like a coal feeder back in the steam-engine era!”

Meihowa began to move while seated on my lap. However, I couldn't see inside the cockpit now, because I was blinded. However, I could feel her feeding the Alter-Armour canned coffees and adrenaline shots.

“Dawnbringer! It's me, Lezirth!”

I didn't know if it could hear me, but I called out to Dawnbringer and climbed up the mountain. The Alter-Armour, unable to fly, crawled up the mountain weakly. Rocks before the machine's feet broke and rolled away, and Dawnbringer Minion fell forwards. But I still pushed it to crawl forward.

—Creaak!

Diablo, the Black Tyrant, slowly moved. The damage I dealt was minuscule to it. If it wakes up, we will die. Maybe it would be wiser of me to flee?

The thought crossed my mind, but... no, I can't. I can't leave now, when Dawnbringer is right before my eyes.

“Dawnbringer! Answer me!”

Lezirth Dawnbringer, the war hero who protected the Human-Race from the Letix invasion with one hundred thousand marines and the Kishin Dawnbringer.

People thought that the Kishin was named after me.

However, that was wrong.

I was one of the Children of Letix, and Dawnbringer was also born from a Letix Uberlord, the Old One. Dawnbringer and I did not only share a simple pilot and machine relationship.



“Lezirth! Where did he go?”

I could hear people looking for me outside. However, I curled up into a ball like a fetus and enjoyed the coziness.

Thump.... Thump....

The pleasant sound of the beating heart. I quietly closed my eyes and nodded my head while enjoying the beat. When I nodded my head, its heart sang back to me with an enjoyable rhythm.

“You. I knew you would be here again.”

[Replicant Sample Boy B, secured!]

Researchers dressed in white coats often found me curled up and sleeping inside Dawnbringer’s embrace. No, words such as Dawnbringer, Kishin or Alter-Armour did not exist back then. There were only the words ‘Letix Uber Replica’ that existed to label us.

“Why does he sleep here instead of the bed?”

“Well, that’s because the boy was found in the research centre, not born here.”

“What?”

“We found this boy here.”

They pointed inside Dawnbringer’s body.



Dawnbringer was no simple machine. It was my brother, my flesh and my soul.

I was a first generation Replicant. I was born as a Replicant even before such a term existed.

Don’t you think I was conflicted!?

Don’t you think I was conflicted about my genetic makeup, being different from other humans, because I was created by humans as something different?

However, even Dawnbringer had a will of its own, no matter how much it appeared to be a machine. I could feel Dawnbringer's support for me as it soothed me, protected me and became my strength.

That was why I could have a will of my own as well as a personality of my own.

"Dawnbringer! Come to me!"

When I called out to Dawnbringer, something unexpected took place.

A golden light fell from the heavens and onto Diablo. Dawnbringer was finally freed from Diablo.

"No way! This is unbelievable!"

Diablo's pilot screamed in surprise. Diablo lay sprawled out on the floor after all that struggling.

Meanwhile, Dawnbringer, or Dawnbringer's core—the Alter-Core rather, slammed itself onto Dawnbringer Minion's body, where I was riding.

Dawnbringer answered my call!

I described this as unexpected, but I must correct myself. This was not expected. It was only obvious for Dawnbringer to respond to my call! Because I would've done the same had it been the other way around!

—Whirrrl!

Suddenly, Dawnbringer Minion's strength began to recover. The lighting inside the cockpit became stronger and the Alter-Armour's condition stabilized quickly.

—Thump... thump... thump....

The heartbeats that watched over me in my younger days came back.

"Oh my...."

Ensign Meihowa was lost for words.

"Today is really full of surprises. To think... that Alter-Armours were like this! They have a will of their own?"

I felt proud as I listened to her exclamations, and nodded my head. I could hear Dawnbringer's heartbeat and feel its presence. Yes, this was my Dawnbringer!

I was happy.

My dear friend that I'm finally reunited with.

We were separated for 120 years without even knowing each other's whereabouts, but I suppose it was fate that brought us together.

We were finally united in this vast universe.

"This must be fate, partner!"

—Wrررر!

Dawnbringer let out a cry in reply.

"That's right. Alter-Armours are no simple machines. Now then! Let's get this party started!"

Then, Dawnbringer Minion's body glowed in brilliant gold.

—Crack!

Dawnbringer Minion's body began to grow! It ate away its old external armour and digested it to create a new layer of armour. The EMP generator on its back was also sucked into Dawnbringer's body, but Dawnbringer's biotic EMP generator—electron eye was formed.

[Roar!]

But at the same time, Diablo raised itself up. It must've come to its senses after being freed of Dawnbringer. It now had a different aura than before.

[I... must thank you for now, pilot of the Federation!]

[I should be thanking you! For delivering Dawnbringer to me like this!]

I smiled. I couldn't help but to smile. This Alter-Armour was no longer the weak Minion-class machine like before! The real Dawnbringer came back to me!

[This is a showdown! I can't back down like this!]

[You took the words straight out of my mouth! I will show you how to really use a Kishin, after seeing you get beaten to a pulp by the Master-class quartet, when you're piloting the Black Tyrant!]

I answered like that and lifted up the giant sword. I've been fighting mostly unarmed before, but Dawnbringer's title was Sacred Sword of Justice!

—Dawnbringer the Sacred Sword of Justice, go forth!

The giant sword began to disintegrate and re-form. The sword measuring 6 meters long quickly turned into a 100 meter long sword of light.

—Kishin Arts! Stormlash!

Diablo the Black Tyrant spread out its claws and attacked with a storm of black lightning and hyperspace. It was an immensely powerful attack!

It was powerful enough to create a moon when executed properly, but the Black Tyrant was not at its full strength. The pilot was far too immature to bring out Diablo's full potential.

“Too weak!”

I swung the sword of light and met the black storm from Diablo head on. The radiating sword of light slashed through the darkness and sliced through both of Black Tyrant's arms.

[Kugh!]

Both of Diablo's arms were lopped off. I saw the inflicted damage and manoeuvred Dawnbringer into the sky.

“This will hurt, so brace yourself!”

Dawnbringer spun in mid-air at high speed. As it did, the sword of light that it was holding, the Sacred Sword of Justice spun with frightening speed and began to slice Diablo recklessly.

—Kishin Arts! Sacred Sword of Justice! Schrödinger's Cat Slash!

Dawnbringer jumped over Diablo and skidded over the water as it leapt off Diablo's back. It skidded like a water ski and Dawnbringer spun to a stop, brandishing the sword.

“Hmph, don't worry. I only struck you with the back of the sword.”

Dawnbringer's Sacred Sword of Justice had no back. The sword was an invincible sword that was able to cut down gods, fiends, and even the Schrödinger's Cat.

I just felt like saying it.

As I put the sword away, Diablo the Black Tyrant was completely down.



“Lezirth... your eyes... your body!”

I could hear Ensign Meihowa making a fuss next to me. However, I closed my eyes while seated in the cockpit.

“It’s OK. The medical nanomachines are already healing me. Let me just rest here like this for a bit.”

I could feel Meihowa’s hand stroking my face.

Was she wiping my blood? I slowly opened my eyes and saw Meihowa’s crying face before me. My eyes must’ve recovered.

“Meihowa, why are you crying?”

“I-I’m not. I do not cry. You are mistaken!”

She cried and laughed at the same time as she hugged my neck. I licked my lips and extended my hand to her back and touched her wings.

“Kya!”

Ensign Meihowa quickly stood up and glared at me.

“I-I told you not to do that! Didn’t you promise me! Why are you so disloyal?”

“Heh heh.”

I laughed and tried to move Dawnbringer. However, the Alter-Armour suddenly shut down.

—Entering human mode.

Huh? What’s it saying?

Sacred Sword of Justice was indeed one of the more powerful techniques that cost a lot of energy, but it was not the Ultimate Kishin Technique. I did consider using

the Ultimate Kishin Technique since it's been such a long time, but I held back knowing that I would kill both Diablo and its pilot if I did use it.

But why did the Dawnbringer go to sleep?

[Lezirth! The Alter-Core that you just recovered was only 5% of the entire Dawnbringer.]

Admiral Louise informed me over the communication channel.

“Eh? So that means?!”

[The Federation holds the remaining 95%.]

Damn! I knew something was wrong when Dawnbringer’s attack was weaker than usual. I just suspected that it was because it was trapped inside a 10-meter tall Alter-Armour, compared to its glorious former height of 40 meters. So this was not the whole Dawnbringer?

[Wow, so you defeated the Black Tyrant with only 5% of the Kishin’s strength?!]

I heard Sergeant Aroha’s surprised voice.

Hey, I just faced off against the Black Tyrant with a Minion-class machine, you know! That’s what you should be surprised about! And the current Black Tyrant cannot even be considered as a complete Kishin.

The pilot is still wet behind the ears.

A Kishin can only be called true and complete if the Kishin-class pilot and Kishin are in unison.

[Is the Diablo dead?]

[No!]

Diablo won’t die. It was simply knocked out and Diablo was quickly recovering itself from its severe damage.

It wouldn’t be able to wake up for a few weeks, but Diablo’s state has stabilized. It was because the Dawnbringer’s core that was forcefully planted inside is gone.

Diablo was also Dawnbringer's brother in a sense. The circumstances brought the two brothers to fight, but... I suppose letting the brothers kill each other was far too much.

But will this Alter-Armour be okay? Even if it was of the same system as Dawnbringer, it might be dangerous to keep it fused with foreign cells.

[Federation pilot.]

Suddenly, someone called be via short distance wireless communication. I opened the connection and saw a silver-haired Elcro boy looking at me from what looked to be inside the Diablo.

His dark green eyes were sharp and he was a handsome man with sharp features. He looked like a prince out of some old shoujo manga.

Could he be an Elcro prince? Seeing that he was an unskilled pilot, that certainly was a possibility.

[I am the fifth prince of the Elcro Oden Kingdom and a captain of the Alliance, Captain Tenserон. I thank you for the mercy you have bestowed upon me. May I hear your name?]

[My name is quite well known, so it would be troublesome for me to say it recklessly. But I will allow you to hear it if you swear to keep it off the records.]

[.....]

Tenserон's expression quickly turned sour. It must've been because of my egotism and the fact that there was an Elcro in the cockpit.

[M-Mother?]

Tenserон whispered absentmindedly.

“... Eh?”

Meihowa hugged my neck in surprise. What was he saying?

[No, th-there is no way. Fine. I will promise to keep it off the records. I swear on my pride.]

“My name is Lezirth Dawnbringer. I am the Commander of Dawn Corps.”

[Wow. So you are the legendary hero that all Replicants worship.]

“Eh? Really? Geez, how embarrassing, there’s no need to worship me. Wait, why do you believe me without doubting?”

No one believed me before and often treated me like a greenie, but I was taken aback, having an enemy I’ve never met before accepting what I just said. I wanted him to doubt me, but how dare he believe me?

[Well, who else could stand up to the Kishin Diablo with a Minion-class machine? Do not worry. I will keep my promise. However, I will challenge you again in the future when I grow stronger. Then oh Great Artus! Please collect your servant!]

When Tenserон prayed, white light began to glow beneath Diablo’s feet. Surprisingly, Diablo appeared to melt and slowly faded into the light.

A warp gate.

It was Elcro white magic that allowed them to travel between space, but carried no consequences to either the user or companion, unlike Teleport. Although it was not as efficient as a hyperspace leap, it allowed the user to travel greater distances than Teleport.

Rumour has it that warp gates were much safer than teleporting because they are blessed by their god Artus.

Although that prince Tenserон was inexperienced as a pilot, his must be one of the best white magic users, even among Elcros. He did move Diablo by himself after all.

‘Then I suppose that means he has great potential.’

If he achieved perfection in one field, then his potential as a pilot would be high. The Elcros must have expected the boy to be able to pilot the Kishin when his potential was measured to be high during the testings.

Maybe I’m letting a formidable foe walk away alive here?

‘Well, he can’t do much to me even if he improves.’

Those skills... well, he wouldn't have a chance against me even if he came back 200 times stronger. He thinks he can defeat me when he lost to me, piloting a Minion-class, and he had a Kishin-class? Hahaha!

[You should've defeated him. Then we could've recovered Diablo as a bonus. Isn't it better to have more Kishins?]

Sergeant Aroha grumbled over the comm channel. She sounded bothered by the fact that I allowed Diablo's pilot to leave. However, I bitterly smiled.

[I, as a Replicant, don't want to do that much for the current Federation. My identity will also be revealed if I do reclaim the Kishin.]

"S-So, you really are... um..."

Ensign Meihowa cleared her throat and looked at me.

"You really are the Vice Admiral... Lezirth Dawnbringer?"

Ensign Meihowa worded her question while looking at my face. I've drilled that fact to her hundreds of times, but it looks like she finally believes me.

I smiled broadly and pulled down her cap over her face.

"Kyaa."

"And you thought I was a maniac when I told you before."

"A-Ah... um..."

She was fidgeting nervously, unaware of how to address me. Seeing her like that, I saluted her.

"Ensign Liu Meihowa. My name is Lezirth Dawnbringer, an Apprentice. I may be new, but please look after me!"

Both the Federation and the Alliance hid secrets yet unknown to us. I must not let others know that I am Lezirth Dawnbringer so easily until I figure out what is going on.

This was the future that the ones who purged Admiral Louise and I 120 years ago made. Assuming that they were still in power, revealing our identities will just get us purged again.

I did just tell the Diablo's pilot my name, but now that I think about it...

It was crazy of me to tell him my name and expect him to believe it. I said it out of the mood, so it can't be helped.

"Well, the detailed story is quite long, so I'll tell it to you some other time."

[To think that I can treat the Vice Admiral any way that I want. I'm glad I joined the Armed Forces.]

Sergeant Aroha smiled brightly as she said that.

"Hey, don't you think you should change your attitude towards me now that you found out that I am the Vice Admiral, Sergeant?"

[Lezirth, Ensign Meihowa! I will re-register that Alter-Armour onto the Federation records, so you can exit the tandem mode. Please hurry up and get out!]

Admiral Louise spoke with a higher tone. Hmm, she can see us right now because the visual channel is also open, isn't it?

Ensign Meihowa also realised that point and quickly stood up.

"Huh? Ah! W-We should. Then let us return, Lezirth."

"But hasn't this machine become the new Kishin Dawnbringer because it absorbed some of the Dawnbringer's core? What if this gets taken away by the Federation when it is re-registered? And its height must be at least a Minor-class, not a Minion-class."

[Don't worry. I can adjust the regular maintenance records. That's nothing too difficult for me. Hmph.]

Admiral Louise appeared to be upset for some reason. Sergeant Aroha hugged her and giggled.

[Gee, Louise, you're so adorable! Here, give your big sis a kiss!]

Like I said, Sergeant Aroha, that person is the former Chief of Staff. I doubt her attitude would change even if I tell her again though.

Ensign Meihowa and I stepped out of the Alter-Armour and jumped back onto the Thorium electric bike. I was on the wheels this time, with Meihowa seated behind me.

“It’s because you keep touching my wings...”

“No, it’s because they have this attractive charm.”

She pouted and hugged my waist after sitting down behind me.

I didn’t realize this because I was always seated behind her on the bike and during the tandem, but something touched me when she hugged my back.

Her. Breasts!

Gulp.

“Why aren’t you moving?”

“Ah, I-I should.”

If Meihowa had this type of impact, then how much impact would Aroha, who is visually bigger than her, have? W-Wait, what am I thinking? No. I have to concentrate on driving! Concentrate!

12. Unidentified

The miners and soldiers who were held hostage in the Azoran Solar System, and the unrelated Replicant recruit platoon now saved!

“These journalists really do write their articles with their feet. I can’t believe they wrote ‘unrelated Replicant recruit platoon’.”

I shook my head while reading the news off the portable terminal strapped to my wrist.

If the headline wasn’t weird enough, its content was even weirder. There were lines such as ‘the Fourth Platoon of the Military Academy was no different to discount coupons to a bankrupt pizza shop’ or ‘the Replicants made no difference to the battle’ brazenly obvious on the official military report news.

I turned off the terminal and looked in the mirror. There stood a slim apprentice, dressed in a full dress uniform. Mm, this is me. I really do look good in a full dress uniform if I say so myself.

My feats in the battle had to remain a secret to hide our identities. My acts of defeating the Diablo and rescuing the Bravo squad were both medal-worthy achievements, but they will not remain on the official records.

However, surviving during the battle was enough to warrant all of us a badge. The Department of Defence came to that decision and presented the most worthless badge of the Federation, the Badge of Meritorious Service Third-Class.

So now, I had to change into a full dress uniform for the ceremony but I was getting changed in the Platoon Leader’s office in the academy because there were no mirrors in recruits’ rooms.

Tch. To think I would have to experience the shame of getting changed into my full dress uniform just to receive a third-rate badge.

Back in the days when I was still a Vice Admiral, managers of the Department of Human Resources or Department of Troop Information and Education used to tremble in fear when they awarded me with something like a third-rate badge.

The adviser for the Department of Troop Information and Education in the General Staff, who happened to be my senior during our military academy days, even apologized to me once with some luxury hotel vouchers and expensive wine sets, for awarding me with such a measly badge.

I also did not attend the ceremony to receive the badge or even the pre-ceremony. When the badge arrived at a later date by mail, I pinned it on my French bulldog's clothes.

Some advisers for the Department of Defence often visited my house with some beer and chicken whenever there was a soccer game or a fighting match, and they were shocked to see the badge on my dog's clothes.

'Why did you do that? Why! You should've given it to me!'

Is what they would say in their drunk minds, and this was what I would always reply to them.

'My dog has been getting obese as of late. So I put it on him so he could exercise.'

... I used to be like that, didn't I.

But now I am just an Apprentice no matter how one looks at me. I should be overjoyed to be receiving something like a third-rate Badge of Meritorious Service.

Actually, I was quite happy.

I wasn't very happy about the badge, but I loved the commission and the month long holiday that came with the badge.

I had no holidays during my days as the Commander of Dawn Corps. I did rest when I had the leisure to, but I had to rush straight out onto the battle during an emergency—even if I was being treated for having my guts destroyed, limbs cut off, and skull crushed or my eyes popped out, and board the Dawnbringer to fight. Because I was in a position of great responsibility!

But being a foot soldier is great! No responsibilities! Wow, how exciting!

"Lezirth. Could you... do my tie please? I don't know how to tie one."

Admiral Louise knocked on the door and spoke embarrassedly. I stepped outside and saw her blushing while waiting outside.

“I have never tied one before.”

The female soldiers’ full dress uniform included a string tie, but she didn’t seem to know how to tie one.

Then again, she did skip all soldier training and became an officer and continued to rise without stopping. Officer full dress uniforms were mandarin collar button types, so why did the soldiers have to wear ties?

“Umm, please hold on for a bit. I’ve always tied them for myself, but never for others, so...”

I went behind her back and tied the tie that way. Admiral Louise leaned on my arm for a moment. Her soft brown hair touched me.

“Lezirth, you know how we have a month long holiday when we receive the badge? But we have no home to go to...”

“Ah.”

That’s right. If we leave the military barracks for the holidays, we would be homeless. We could always stay at the barracks, but that was too pitiful. Spending the holidays eating and sleeping at the barracks. Shouldn’t we be able to enjoy the holidays at a hotel at some holiday resorts?

“Why don’t we use some of the commission or the reward for services? Since this is a paid holiday, we shouldn’t have to stay homeless, even though it won’t be a luxurious one.”

“Hmm, but umm... I want you to listen to this without misunderstanding. Don’t you think we can save some accommodation fees... if we share the same accommodation? Going on trips as a packaged deal... would be cheaper as well.”

Admiral Louise’s face turned bright red after she said that.

“Is there something that you would like to buy after saving the accommodation fees? But, d-don’t you think it would be dangerous for a male and a female to share the same accommodation?”

“I-It will be OK. I trust you, Lezirth. You wouldn’t do something that would upset me, would you Lezirth? Right?”

She clenched her hands into a fist and looked up at me.

Hmm, I would like to readjust her tie to make both sides even now that I tied it, but... Admiral Louise was looking at me with such a desperate look. Her brown hair and golden eyes were reminiscent of a cat. I felt like I was being sucked into her clear and beautiful eyes, that would be a rare colour for a human.

Ehh... so I will be spending a month with this girl under the same roof? I-I had no intentions of doing anything rude to Admiral Louise, but it really disheartened me if she trusted me to this extent when I was a man.

“I-I would never do something that the Admiral would disapprove of!”

I smiled and saluted her, and Admiral Louise laughed.

“But you disobeyed my plea and charged into the dangerous battle! And you still continue to call me an Admiral... you really have a bad personality, Lezirth. But I’ll trust you again.”

“B-But you shouldn’t trust a man so easily. It would leave a bad mark on your fame if others see you like this.”

“But our budget for the trip will be so tight. Ah, a double bed is cheaper than the twin option. Should I book the double size?”

Huh? What did she just say?

Hold on. Twin beds are when two beds are set separately, and the double size was just a single large bed, isn’t it? Or was it the other way around? I was suddenly overwhelmed with the confusion between the two simple terminologies.

How many beds are there in a double bed? And how many beds are there in a twin bed? If there’s a single bed, then should I sleep on the floor or the sofa? Or maybe...?

Gestalt! Gestalt overload!

"Ehh? You already chose a destination without even consulting me? And wait, a double bed?!"

"Hii? W-Will you do something to me when we g-go on the trip together?"

Tears gathered in her eyes and Admiral Louise looked up at me, about to burst into tears. She looked betrayed, or just disappointed in me.

"No way! I wouldn't!"

"Then I can book the double bed. Great. Fufu."

She quickly spun around like she expected it.

Eh?

What kind of logic is this?! Wait, it does seem to be right in a logical sense, but something's not right!

Gestalt overload again!

I was greatly confused. I think I just heard a 'fufufu, I am the final victor, you thieving cats!' just now, but it must've been my imagination, right?

Then suddenly, the office door opened.

"Are you ready yet?"

Ensign Meihowa and Sergeant Aroha walked in. Both of them were dressed in the full dress uniforms. Officer's and petty officer's uniforms respectively, but they also wore a long sword by their side. Both of them wore mandarin collar uniforms: the officer's uniform was navy blue, and the petty officer's was aquamarine in colour.

Hoo? The girls appeared to be quite bold and dashing in those military uniforms.

"By the way, Lezirth and Louise, both of you don't have a house to go back to, do you?"

"That's why this big sis here prepared something great for us."

Sergeant Aroha took out paper envelopes from her uniform. Seeing that there's a travel agent's logo on the envelope, maybe it's some flight tickets or accommodation or even travel prize set?

"Ta-da~ it's tickets for Airtel. Travel tickets and hotel tickets in one! My sister works at the general affairs department of a general trading company, so she gets a lot of mileage points. And I secured four tickets for us all! What do you think? Aren't you grateful? You may praise me, Pereira Aroha! Ohohohoho!"

Sergeant Aroha formed a fan from the envelopes and fanned herself.

"Ohh, I praise you and worship you."

Ensign Meihowa mimicked some bowing actions. Seeing the usually serious soldier like her acting like that made me unconsciously smile. However, Admiral Louise's expression stiffened when she saw that.

"Ah... hahahaha. I just finished booking our trip, so what can we do? What a pity."

However, the hologram terminal had not yet finalized the payment. Sergeant Aroha caught a sight of that and quickly exchanged glances with Ensign Meihowa.

"Let's stop her."

"Yeah!"

"N-No! Don't come near me! Stop it! Kyaa! Help me! Lezirth!"

Ensign Meihowa and Sergeant Aroha leapt at Admiral Louise and stopped her from registering the trip.

I saw the girls acting like that and drew a sign of the cross before me.

"I'm sorry. I would rather fight a corps of Letix Predators than try to stop them."



We were transported to the Epiece-2 Retired Servicemen Hall, where the ceremony was being held, on a shuttle bus. Everyone who survived the recent

event were all smartly dressed in full dress uniform and they recognised and greeted us when we stepped onto the bus. Ensign Meihowa and Sergeant Aroha were busy responding back to all those salutes.

The badge awarding ceremony was conducted in a very rapid fashion.

These ceremonies were usually carried out very solemnly. Also, many of the Ursa Major Brigade members died in battle and many of the soldiers from the mining base did not survive. It was only obvious for a city-state to honour the survivors with utmost respect.

However, the members of our platoon were not considered to be citizens of the city-state.

As a result, we received the badges from some bald, yawning, Lieutenant Commander who claimed to be the secretary of the advisor at the Department of Troop Information and Education, First Headquarters.

While we were receiving those medals, surviving Ursa Major Brigade members were participating in the funeral and the badge awarding ceremony at the Epiece President Convention Centre with the ‘human citizens’.

Well, who cares about a cheap badge like this? The holiday and the commission was my true goal, anyway. Now then, is it time to kick back and enjoy the holidays?

“How are ya gonna spend the holidays, man? I’m gonna play all the online games that I had to give up on, ya know? Wanna join me? I can level up your characters crazy fast for ya?”

Pencolt asked me as he sat next to me on the bus. This guy had turned into quite a handsome fellow after losing so much weight from the training and the operation. A normal human’s skin would’ve become saggy after a sudden loss of weight, but he was perfectly fine—most likely because of Replicant properties.

“No, I will probably go to the Critic system where they have hot springs, ski resorts and tropical beaches.”

“Ohh! It’s quite expensive over there. Ya rich boy! Well I guess it can’t be helped. Tch, who are ya goin’ with?”

“Probably with the Ensign, Sergeant and Louise...”

Before I could even finish my sentence, someone kicked the back of my seat.

“Damn it! This guy’s sweeping away all of the beauties in our platoon.”

“The battle in the Oden system should worsen so that the holiday gets cut short!”

Some soldiers seated in front of me cursed. Why did these guys hate me so much? It won’t only be my holiday that gets cut short, you know? All of yours will get cut short as well.

Meanwhile, Admiral Louise, who was crushed by Ensign Meihowa and Sergeant Aroha, was sitting at the back of the bus, by the window seat, with her arms crossed and was pouting while going ‘hmph!’ or ‘pht!’ or ‘tch!’.

Sergeant Aroha and Ensign Meihowa were sitting next to her.

“Hey, come on Louise. You can save your holiday fees and go shopping instead. Shopping.”

“Shopping?”

“I want to buy this, but what do you think? Do you think it would suit me?”

Sergeant Aroha used the hologram feature on the portable personal terminal to visualize an image of her holding a handbag in her hand. Ensign Meihowa knit her brows.

“It wouldn’t suit you in a full dress uniform.”

“Handbags would obviously not go well with military uniforms.”

“Sergeant has red hair and blue eyes, so.... what about this?”

“No way, this looks too mature.”

The girls were instantly caught up in chattering over the shopping catalogue. Admiral Louise was also caught up in the flow and forgot that she was angry.

Whew, what a relief. It was a relief for now, but I was worried that a tempest would occur when they, or rather we, go shopping.

I looked outside the window, deep in my thoughts. Then suddenly, something strange flashed past my eyes.

A girl with long, blue hair was standing by a streetlamp. But her hair wasn't just long. Her hair was so long, it made me wonder whether it wouldn't bother her with everyday chores.

Thinking that I was just seeing things, I opened my eyes wide and stared at the girl. Then suddenly, the girl's lips moved.

I could only see the movements of her lips without hearing what she was saying, but I knew what she was saying instantly.

'Good morning Lezirth. Long time no see. Did you sleep well for the last 120 years?'

That was what she said.

Then suddenly, something flashed before my eyes.

Only she and I remained in the middle of the empty universe. And around us were stars, stars, stars...

A great sea of stars!

'Lezirth... do not abandon me. I have waited for you for such a long time. A lot longer than you may think.'

I could hear her voice. Her voice that echoed inside my head was soft and desperate, yet shook my brain like thunder.

"*Gasp!?*"

I extended my head outside in surprise and looked at the streetlamp that the bus just passed. However, the girl was nowhere in sight. Were my eyes playing tricks on me?

"What are you doing!"

A car on the other side of the road swore at me as it drove past. I quickly tucked my head back inside to avoid the car.

Was it because I was feeling fatigued? I think it's because I was injured after piloting the Alter-Armour after such a long time. I should be okay after the month long holiday.

I leaned back in my seat and closed my eyes, anticipating about the holiday. It was quite fulfilling to be the shield of the Human-Race and the Commander of Dawn Corps, but this foot soldier's life was not all that bad.

But above all, I was looking forward to the holiday.

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